Fragments of Horror

Junji Ito

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FUTON

THE MAN I ELOPED WITH AND CURRENTLY LIVE WITH...

...IS TERRIFIED OF SOMETHING AND HE WON'T COME OUT FROM UNDER THE FUTON.

YOU'RE FINE WITH THIS?!

M-MADOKA ...

WHAT ARE YOU SO AFRAID OF?

C'MON, TOMIO... HONESTLY, WHAT'S THE MATTER?

WHAT ARE YOU EVEN TALKING ABOUT ?!

DARK NATURE SPIRITS ...?

THIS WORLD IS JAM-PACKED WITH DARK NATURE SPIRITS!

THERE... LOOK, THEY'RE THERE TOO!

HURRY AND HIDE! GET UNDER THE FUTON!!

YOU CAN'T SEE THEM?!

EVENTUALLY, HE STOPPED DOING EVEN THAT AND BEGAN TO WEAR DIAPERS.

AND OF COURSE, I WAS THE ONE WHO TOOK CARE OF HIM.

IN THIS STATE, HE STOPPED LEAVING THE APARTMENT AND REFUSED TO GO TO THE PSYCH CLINIC.

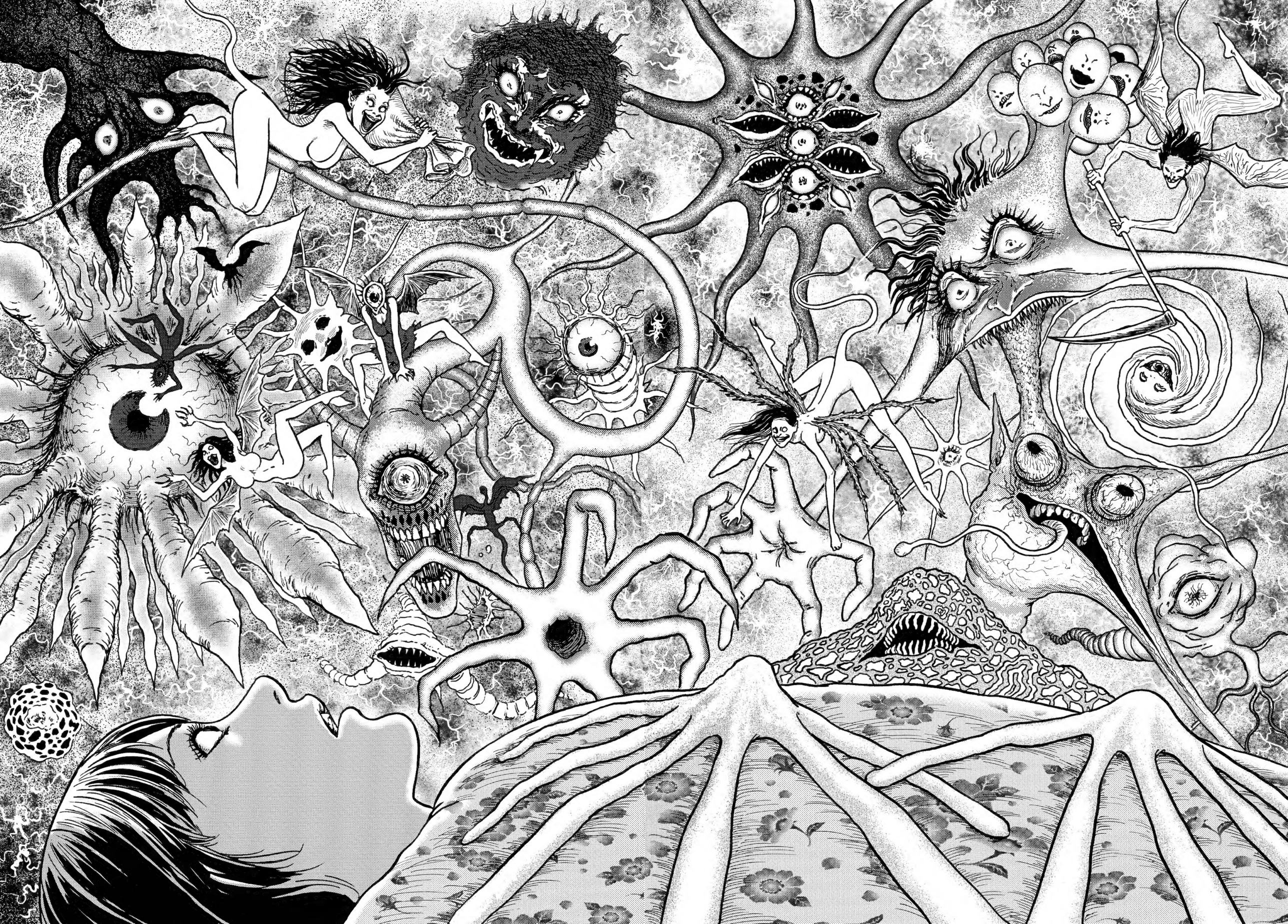
AT FIRST, HE OCCASIONALLY CAME OUT FROM UNDER THE FUTON TO GO TO THE BATHROOM, BUT...

I WAS FAST APPROACH-ING MY MENTAL AND PHYSICAL LIMITS.

THIS WAS HOW WE LIVED.

I WORKED ALL DAY, AND AT NIGHT TOOK CARE OF TOMIO.

AND THEN ONE NIGHT...



AAAAAH!

THERE. THAT WOMAN!

SHE DID ALL OF THIS!

MADOKA... Y-YOU GOTTA FORGIVE ME!

HEE HEE HEE HEE!

IT'S ALL BECAUSE OF THAT WOMAN!

A WOMAN I KNEW NOTHING ABOUT.

A WOMAN WAS PASSING BY.

THIS ONE NIGHT WHEN YOU WERE OUT!

I CONFESS! I WAS THE ONE WHO SUMMONED HER HERE!

TEA

AQUA

AAAAAH!

LEAP

SHE SAID SHE WAS A WITCH.

IT WAS CREEPY, SO I BROKE IT OFF PRETTY QUICK, BUT SHE REALLY IS A WITCH.

TOMIO ...?

TOMIO ...

I RAN OUT OF THE APART-MENT.

A MONTH PASSED BEFORE I RETURNED ...

AN INVESTIGATION LATER FOUND THAT THIS SPONGY MATERIAL WAS AN UNKNOWN MOLD WITH STRONG HALLUCINOGENIC EFFECTS.

SOME SPONGY, UH, THING THAT GLOWED WITH A BIZARRE PHOSPHO-RESCENCE HAD COLONIZED THE FUTON.

TOMIO WAS JUST BARELY ALIVE.

FUTON/END

WOODEN
SPIRIT

LAST YEAR, IT WAS SELECTED TO BE A REGISTERED NATIONAL TANGIBLE CULTURAL PROPERTY.

MY HOUSE HAS A PEDIGREE; IT'S BEEN IN MY FAMILY FOR GENERATIONS.

WE SHARED JOY, SADNESS, **EVERYTHING** WITH THIS HOUSE.

HE AND I WERE BOTH BORN AND RAISED IN THIS HOUSE.

THE NOBLE WOODEN BUILDING WITH ITS THATCH ROOF IS MY FATHER'S PRIDE AND JOY.

THIS IS WHERE WE LIVE.

BUT, DAD, TO BE HONEST, I DON'T REALLY WANT STRANGERS COMING IN THE HOUSE.

FLAP FLAP

WE'LL HAVE REGULAR VISITORS TOO, SO WE HAVE TO KEEP THE PLACE CLEAN.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN, MEGUMI? AS OWNERS OF A CULTURAL PROPERTY, IT'S OUR DUTY TO LET THE PUBLIC SEE THE HOUSE.

EXCUSE ME!

YES, COMING!

WHO IS IT?

OKAY.

WHO'S THAT? MEGUMI, GO AND SEE.

SOGA

WE DON'T ALLOW VISITORS OUTSIDE OF THE TOUR GROUP.

OH, IF YOU WANT TO SEE THE HOUSE, THERE'S A TOUR GROUP, SO PLEASE COME WITH THEM.

I'M STUDYING ARCHITECTURE AT UNIVERSITY. I HEARD ABOUT YOUR WONDERFUL HOUSE, AND SO I CAME BY HOPING YOU MIGHT ALLOW ME TO TAKE A LOOK AT IT.

I'M SORRY FOR INTRUDING UPON YOU LIKE THIS. MY NAME IS MANAMI KINO.

BUT...

COULDN'T YOU MAKE AN EXCEPTION ?

THANK YOU SO MUCH.

BUT DAD...

MEGUMI, LET OUR GUEST IN. SHE'S COME ALL THIS WAY.

RIGHT THIS WAY.

THIS HOUSE WAS BUILT IN 1854, THE FIRST YEAR OF THE ANSEI ERA.

WE'RE DIRECT DESCENDANTS OF THE BUILDER; OUR FAMILY HAS MAINTAINED IT FOR GENERATIONS.

IT'S A WONDERFUL BUILDING.

THE FLOOR ...

THE WALLS ...

THIS PILLAR ...

...?

THEY'RE VERY SEXY.

SOMEHOW, I GET CHILLS LOOKING AT THEM.

AND I CAN FEEL A MASCULINE STRENGTH IN THE JOISTS IN THE CEILING.

GOOD-NESS! WHAT ABOUT YOUR WIFE?

IT'S JUST MY DAUGHTER AND MYSELF LIVING TOGETHER HERE.

MY, SO MANY... HOW MANY PEOPLE ARE IN YOUR FAMILY?

ELEVEN ALTOGETHER.

AND IT'S SO BIG. HOW MANY ROOMS?

OH, EXCUSE ME...I DIDN'T MEAN TO PRY.

AAH...MY WIFE AND I SPLIT UP SEVERAL YEARS AGO...

ER...

I REALIZE IT'S QUITE SHAMELESS OF ME TO ASK YOU THIS SO SUDDENLY THE FIRST TIME I VISIT, BUT...

I THINK IT'S GOING TO BE A KEY ELEMENT IN PROGRESS-ING WITH MY ARCHITEC-TURE STUDIES.

IT REALLY IS EVEN MORE WONDERFUL THAN I'D IMAGINED.

WHAT IS IT?

HM?

I'M DELIGHTED BY YOUR VERY KIND WORDS.

YES...I'M THOROUGHLY ENAMORED WITH IT.

WHAT? ...YOU WANT TO—? IN THIS HOUSE?!

WOULD YOU PERHAPS ALLOW ME TO BOARD HERE FOR A WHILE?

PLEASE!

ER, BUT—

WHILE I'M HERE, I'LL TAKE CARE OF YOU AND YOUR DAUGHTER.

I'D LOVE TO REALLY STUDY THE BUILDING'S HISTORY AND STRUCTURE FOR A WHILE.

I'M FINE WITH EVEN THE STORE-ROOM.

WHAT! WHAT DID YOU SAY?

PLEASE LET ME STAY.

PLEASE ...

YOU'RE REALLY TWISTING MY ARM...

HA HA HA!

HMM, TWO OR THREE MONTHS AT MOST, I SUPPOSE.

FOR A WHILE? HOW LONG?

IT DOESN'T MAKE ANY SENSE!

BUT A BOARDER ALL OF A SUDDEN ...

MM-HMM. IT'LL BE FINE FOR A LITTLE WHILE, WON'T IT?

YOU JUST WENT AHEAD AND DECIDED THAT?!

THAT WOMAN IS GOING TO LIVE HERE?

THAT'S JUST YOUR IMAGINATION, MEGUMI.

AND SHE WAS MAKING EYES AT YOU, DAD. SHE WAS.

GOING AROUND TO OTHER PEOPLE'S HOUSES AND TALKING ABOUT HOW SEXY THEY ARE.

TO START WITH, SHE'S PRETTY WEIRD.

...

SHE SAYS SHE'S GOING TO TAKE CARE OF US.

AND I DON'T THINK IT'S SUCH A BAD DEAL FOR YOU EITHER.

SO YOU'LL BE ABLE TO CONCENTRATE ON YOUR STUDIES.

NOTHING'S GOING TO HAPPEN BETWEEN US!

R- RIDICULOUS!

DO NOT GET INTO ANY KIND OF WEIRD RELATIONSHIP WITH THAT WOMAN!

FINE, BUT LET ME JUST SAY THIS, DAD.

BUT I REALLY AM LOOKING FORWARD TO THIS.

I DO APOLOGIZE FOR PERHAPS OVERSTEP-PING.

THE NEXT DAY

YOU'LL BE USING A ROOM UPSTAIRS.

COME IN.

GOODNESS! THIS LOVELY ROOM?

...

THANK YOU SO MUCH.

JUST LET ME KNOW IF YOU NEED ANYTHING.

WHAT A FEAST!

SSSSH

BUBBLE

BUBBLE

...IT REALLY IS.

OH, THIS IS REALLY GOOD.

MY IMPRESSION OF HER CHANGED.

IT WAS IN LIEU OF RENT, BUT IT WAS TO THE POINT WHERE WE SHOULD HAVE BEEN PAYING HER.

JUST AS SHE SAID SHE WOULD, MANAMI KINO TOOK PERFECT CARE OF EVERYTHING FOR US.

IT DIDN'T TAKE MUCH TIME AT ALL BEFORE THE TWO OF THEM MADE THINGS OFFICIAL.

I GUESS DAD HAD THE SAME THOUGHT.

I EVEN WONDERED WHAT IT WOULD BE LIKE IF SHE WERE TO MARRY DAD.

WHAT? ARE YOU SURE, MANAMI?

WE'RE NOT. MANAMI SAYS SHE WANTS TO STAY AT HOME.

SO WHERE ARE YOU GOING ON YOUR HONEYMOON?

HUH.

I AM... I LOVE BEING IN THIS HOUSE.

AND THEN, ONE NIGHT...

ANYWAY, AFTER THAT, FOR SOME REASON, DAD SUDDENLY SEEMED PRETTY DOWN.

IT'S NOT THAT.

HMM? NO...

WHAT'S THE MATTER THEN?

SO...

ARE THINGS NOT GOING WELL WITH MANAMI?

HEY, DAD. YOU HAVEN'T BEEN YOUR USUAL SELF LATELY...

THIS HOUSE...

IS IT REALLY THAT WONDERFUL?

LET ME ASK YOU, MEGUMI ...

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

HUH?

IT'S YOUR PRIDE AND JOY, DAD.

IT'S A TANGIBLE CULTURAL ASSET, AND MORE THAN THAT, IT'S THE HOUSE WE GREW UP IN.

THAT'S OUT OF THE BLUE! WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT? ISN'T IT?

THE WALLS ...

SOME-THING'S WEIRD...

THE JOISTS ...

THE PILLARS ...

IT'S BEEN WEIRD LATELY, THE HOUSE...

I DON'T REALLY KNOW ANYMORE.

LOOK CARE-FULLY.

HUH? WEIRD HOW?

HEY, WHERE IS MANAMI ANYWAY?

PROBABLY UPSTAIRS ...

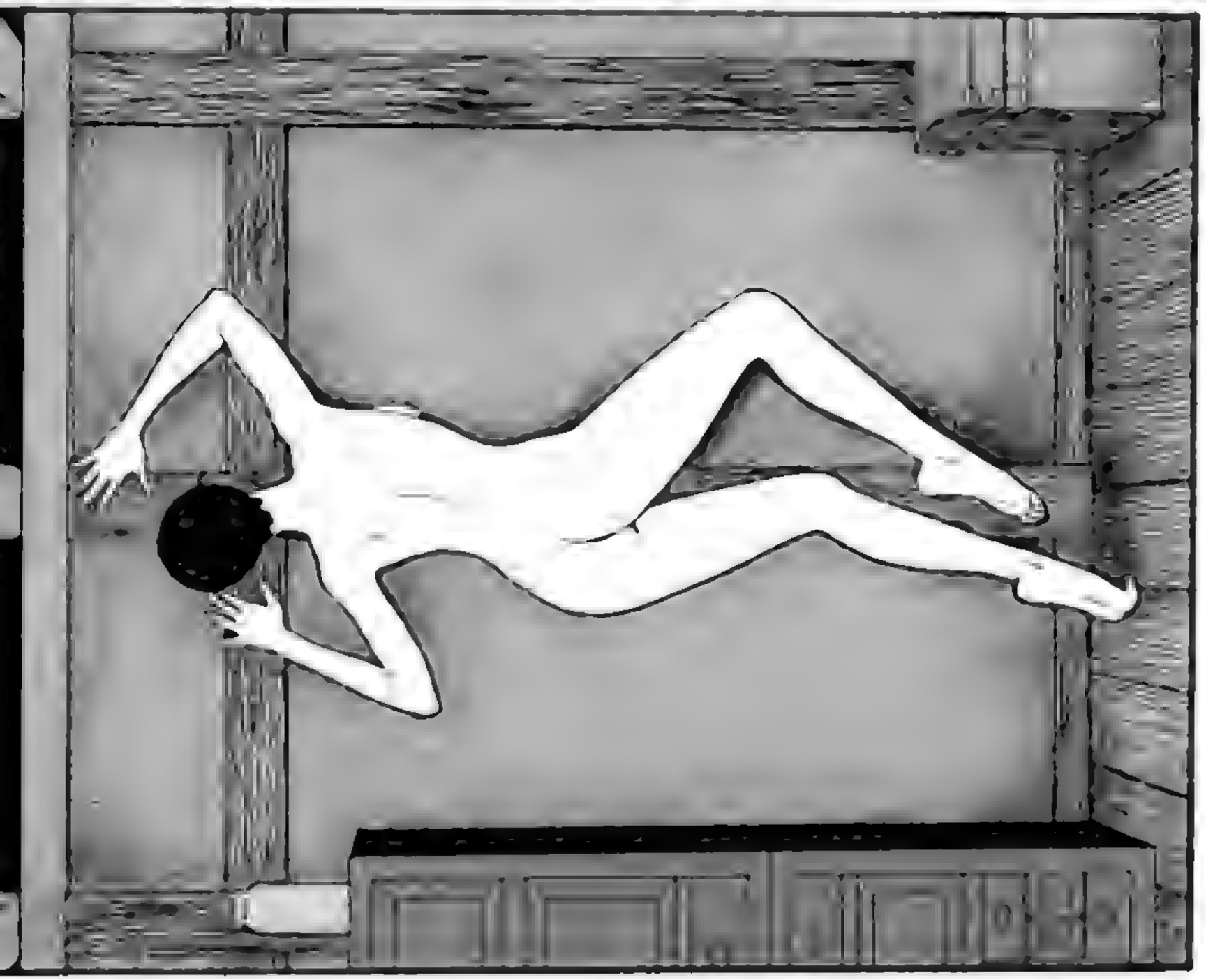
I DON'T SEE ANYTHING...

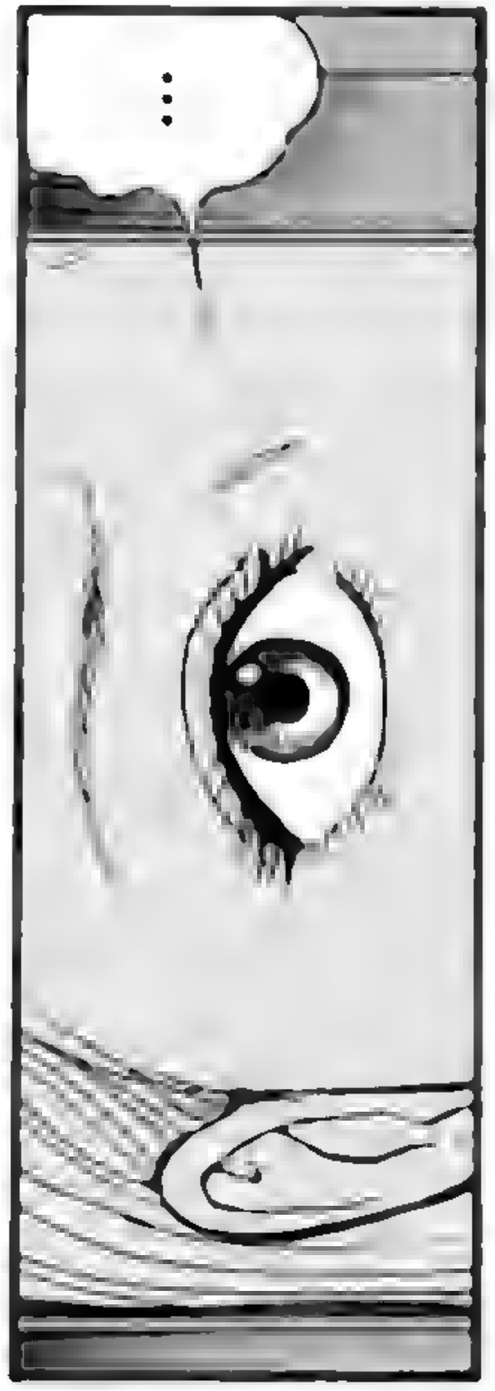
ARE YOU UP HERE?

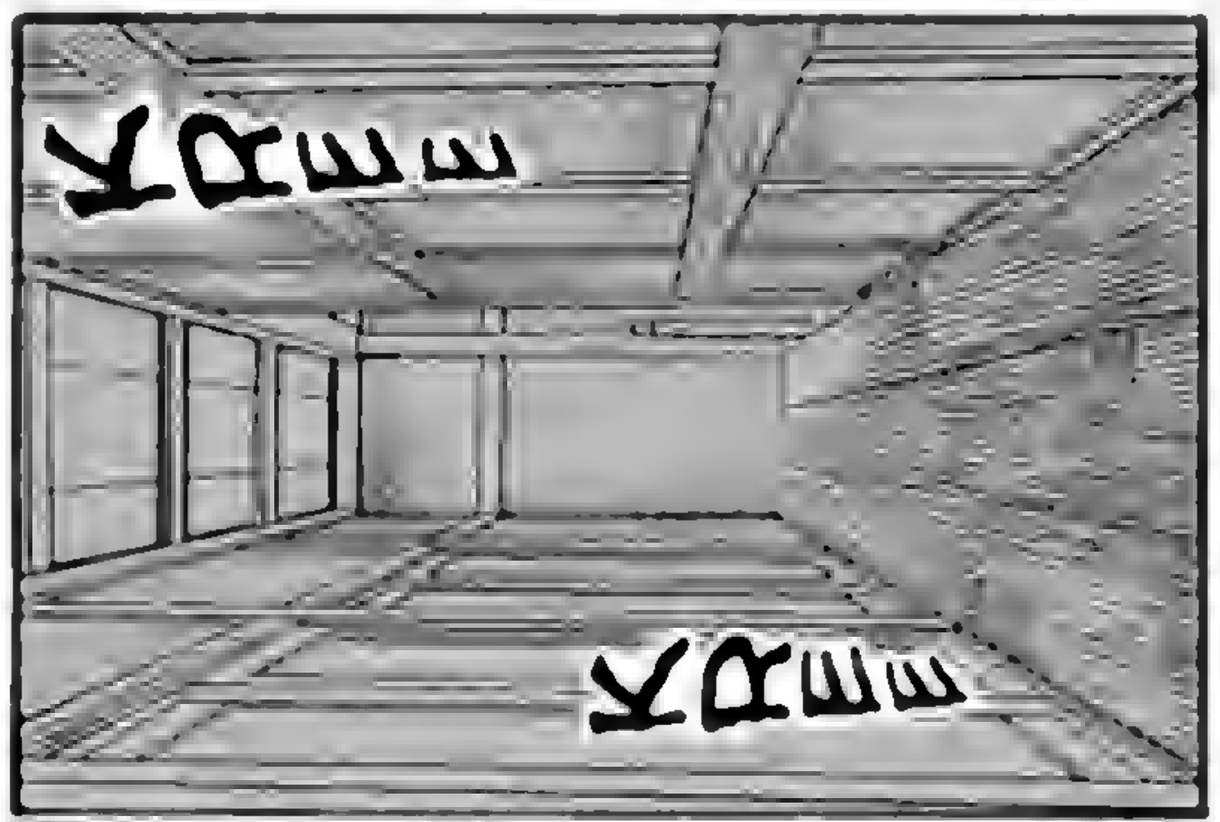
MANAMI ...

...WHAT IS SHE DOING?

AAH!







SHE REALLY IS A WEIRDO, AFTER ALL...

KREE

SHE'S WEIRD...

KREE

KREE

I WONDER IF SHE'S STILL DOING THAT...

KREE

HAAH

HAAH

HA-HA-HA-

SHUDDER

AH!

DAD...

HAAAAAAAH

RRK RRK RRK

SWAY

SHUDDER

AN EARTH-QUAKE?!

DAD! EARTH-QUAKE!

SWAY

SHUDDER

KRR

KRR

KRR KRR KRR KRR KRR

SHUDDER

DISGUSTING! JUST SICK!

WHO WOULD DO THIS?

RRK RRK RRK

MEGUMI! NOW IS NOT THE TIME!

DAD!

SWAY

SHUDDER

RRK RRK

DO WHAT?

HUH?

I SCRUB AND SCRUB AND IT DOESN'T COME OFF.

IT'S SO STRANGE ...

SWAY

SHUDDER

RRK RRK

COME ON, DAD! DO THAT LATER! IT'S AN EARTH-QUAKE!

AH!

WHAT IS WRONG?

LOOK, MEGUMI!

THIS IS A REAL PROBLEM.

WHO ON EARTH WOULD DO THIS?!

VANDALIZING A PRECIOUS CULTURAL ASSET WITH GRAFFITI LIKE THIS!

RRRR

EEEAAAAH!

HAAAA

HAAA

KRRRR

KRRRR

NOOOO!

WHAT IS THIS?!

OUR HOUSE!

OUR HOUSE ...

AAAAAH!

OOOOOH!

WH- WHERE IS SHE?!

WHERE IS MANAMI?!

HO
HO
HO

...OF WHEN I WAS LITTLE.

I HAD A DREAM...

HO HO

MOM...

CIN-ZO

CIN-ZO

LET'S JUST GET OUT OF HERE!

DAD! STOP!

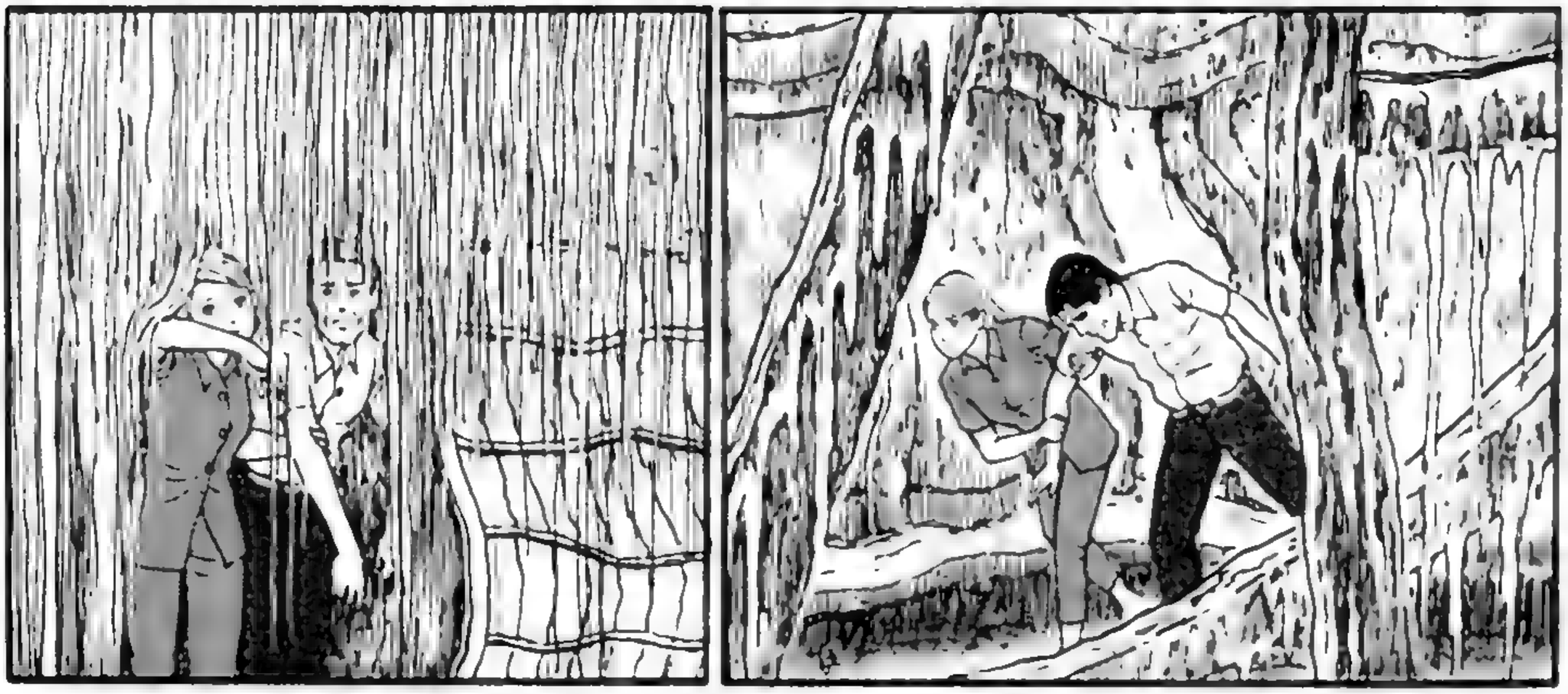
BURN THIS HOUSE TO THE GROUND!

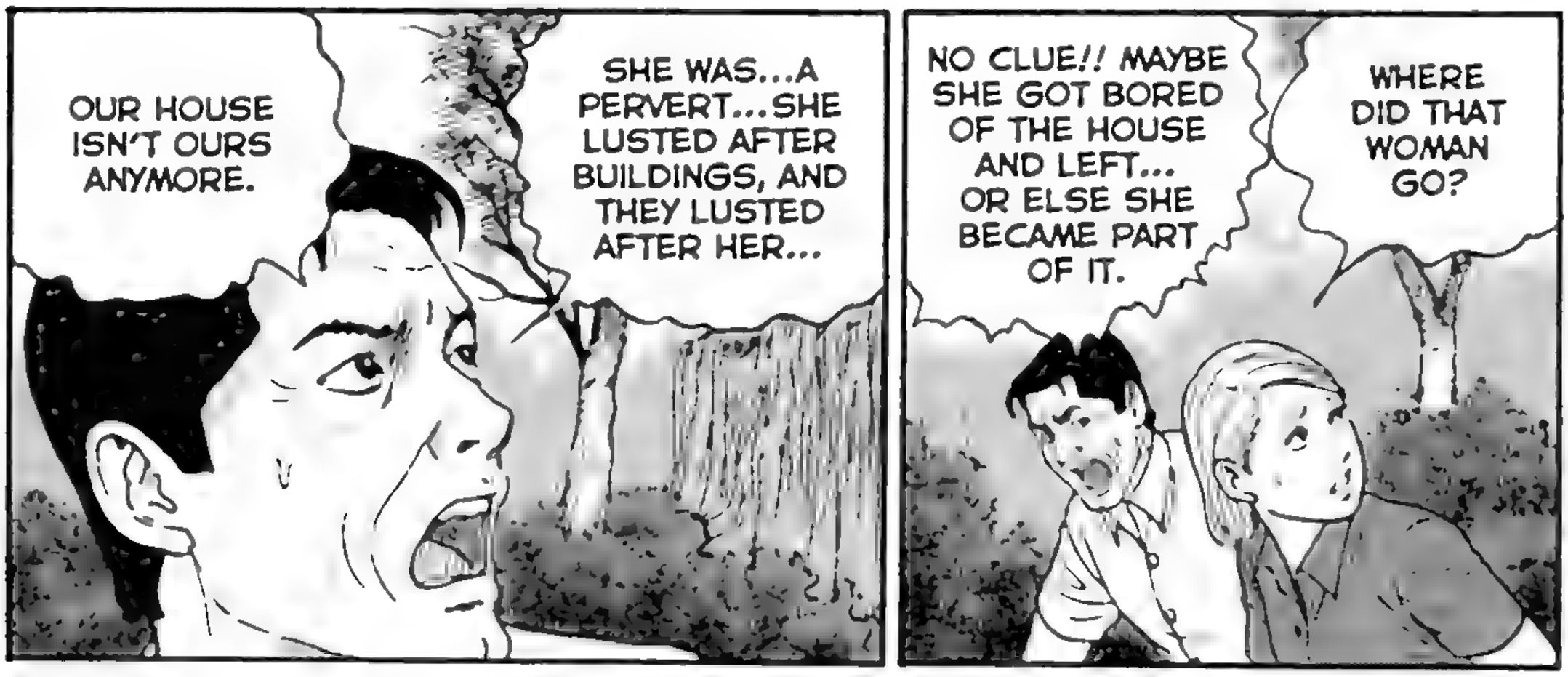
I'LL BURN IT DOWN!

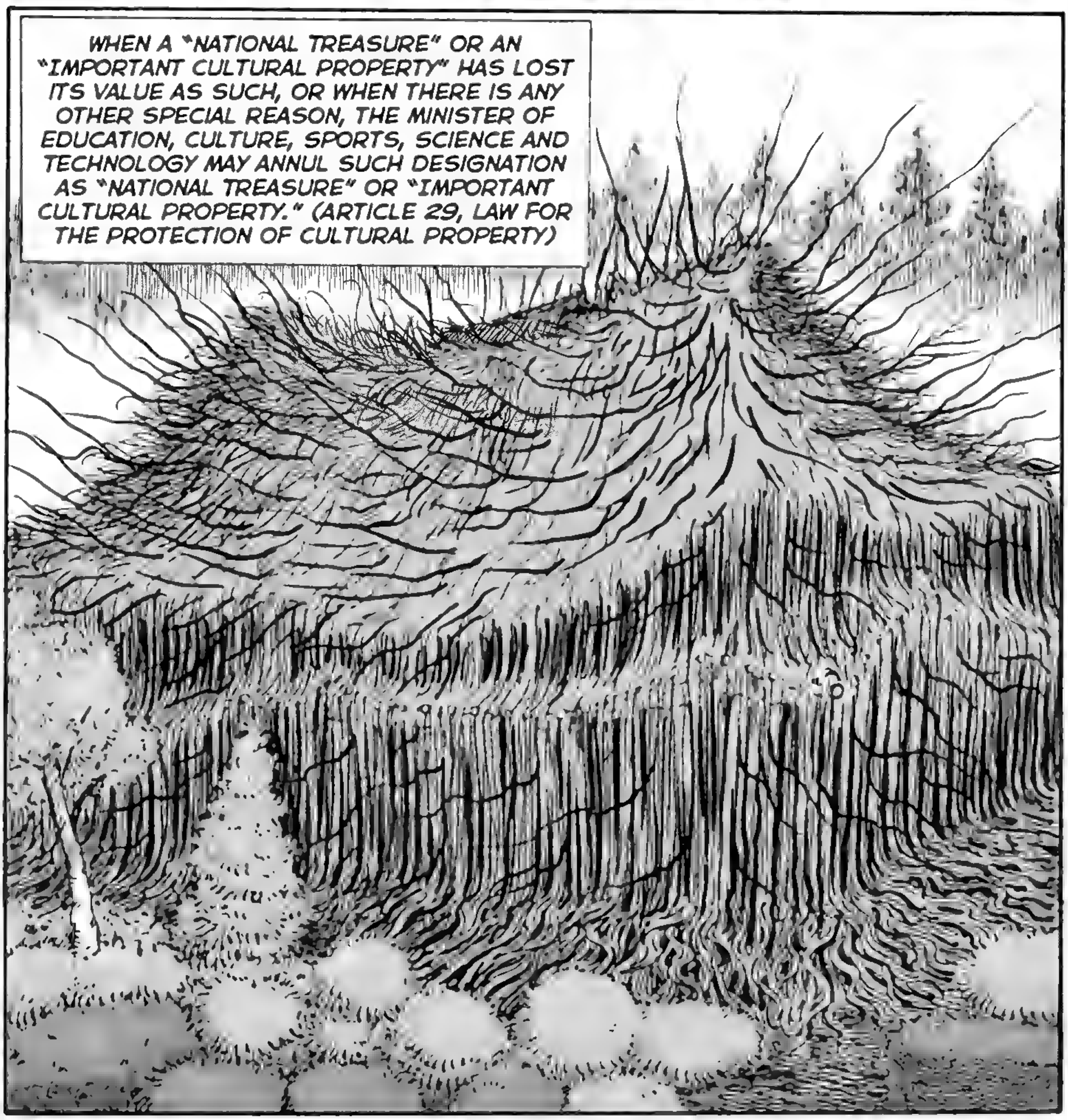
DAD!

SPLSH

SPLSH




OUR HOUSE ISN'T OURS ANYMORE.
SHE WAS...A PERVERT...SHE LUSTED AFTER BUILDINGS, AND THEY LUSTED AFTER HER...
NO CLUE!! MAYBE SHE GOT BORED OF THE HOUSE AND LEFT... OR ELSE SHE BECAME PART OF IT.
WHERE DID THAT WOMAN GO?


WHEN A "NATIONAL TREASURE" OR AN "IMPORTANT CULTURAL PROPERTY" HAS LOST ITS VALUE AS SUCH, OR WHEN THERE IS ANY OTHER SPECIAL REASON, THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION, CULTURE, SPORTS, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY MAY ANNUL SUCH DESIGNATION AS "NATIONAL TREASURE" OR "IMPORTANT CULTURAL PROPERTY." (ARTICLE 29, LAW FOR THE PROTECTION OF CULTURAL PROPERTY)

NEMU ARCADE

HMM?

UM...

UH...

FRESH FISH

MY HEAD...
MY!
HUH? WHAT?
P-PLEASE HELP ME...
E-EXCUSE ME...
JUST GOT IN SOME LIVELY SEA BREAM!
FRESH FISH! RIGHT HERE!
TH
UK

TOMIO • RED TURTLENECK

WALK CARE-FULLY...

CARE-FUL...

...ARE GOING NUMB.

MY HANDS ...

JUST CALM DOWN...

CALM DOWN...

BAM

BAM

MADOKA ...

MADOKA ...

KNOCK

PLEASE!

PLEASE OPEN THE DOOR!

TOMIO...

WHAT DO YOU WANT?

YOU'RE SAYING THAT *NOW*?

JUST GO BACK TO THAT WOMAN ALREADY.

I...I'M SORRY ...

M-MADOKA... HELP ME...

WHAT'S WRONG?

TOMIO...

I-I DON'T WANT TO DIE...

I DON'T WANT TO DIIIIE!

HELP ME...

FORGIVE ME...

YOU CAN JUST GO BACK TO THAT WOMAN!

I CAN'T STAND IT ANYMORE. WE'RE THROUGH! GET OUT!

THREE DAYS EARLIER

TOMIO, I'VE HAD IT WITH YOUR CHEATING!

SLAM

LATER!

SHE'S WAY HOTTER THAN YOU! WAY MORE GLAMOROUS TOO!

FINE! I'M GONE!

...

THAT WOMAN...

SHE STOLE TOMIO'S HEART...

THE FORTUNE TELLER WE MET WHEN WE WENT TO HAVE OUR FUTURE TOGETHER TOLD...

WH-WHAT DID YOU SAY?!

AND YOU WILL SOON SEPARATE.

YOU ARE DEEPLY INCOMPAT-IBLE.

TOMIO...?

...

ME TOO.

THE SECOND I SAW YOU, I WAS HEAD OVER HEELS.

YEAH.

HEH HEH HEH...SO YOU FINALLY BROKE UP.

WITH MY HEAD? ... YOU SAY THE STRANGEST THINGS.

YES...I AM IN LOVE WITH YOUR HEAD.

MY NECK ...?

THEY'RE VERY BEAUTIFUL.

YOUR NECK, YOUR HEAD...

...MY SEVERED HEAD?

I WANT YOUR BEAUTIFUL HEAD FOR MY COLLECTION.

YOUR SEVERED HEAD.

I WANT YOUR HEAD.

WONDER-FUL.

ANY-THING FOR YOU.

HEH-HEH!

WILL YOU GIVE ME YOUR SEVERED HEAD?

PLK

SQUEEZE

...WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

UNH!

SMACK

GRK GRK GRK GRK GRK GRK

NGH NGH...

AND NOW LOOK... THE MARK'S NOT GOING AWAY...

I CAN'T GO OUTSIDE LIKE THIS.

THAT WAS SERI-OUSLY NOT NICE...

KOFF! KOFF!

TUG

SEE?

YOU CAN JUST WEAR THIS.

I'LL SHOW YOU SOMETHING GOOD.

COME.

THERE.

THIS "SOMETHING GOOD"...

WHAT IS IT?

THAT.

HMM?

HEH HEH HEH.

HEH HEH HEH.

...

WUUH!

HA HA HA! YOU CAN'T RUN!

UNH.

AH!

AAAH!

M-MY NECK FEELS WEIRD.

HAAH!

HAAH!

UNH!

HAAH! HAAH!

I-IT CAN'T BE...

GRK GRK GRK

YANK

GRK GRK GRK GRK GRK GRK

HEH HEH! GOODNESS! WHATEVER COULD BE THE MATTER?

LOOKS LIKE MY HAIR SLIPPED INTO THE TURTLENECK, HMM?

UNH! AAH!

GRK GRK GRK GRK GRK GRK

MY HAIR IS STRONGER THAN STEEL, YOU KNOW... BETTER HURRY AND SUPPORT YOUR HEAD.

OTHERWISE, IT'LL FALL OFF.

SNAP

GRK GRK GRK GRK GRK GRK

UNH! HNG HNGH HNGH!

EEEEEE

GOOD LUCK! IF THE NERVES SLIP EVEN A LITTLE, IT'S OVER FOR YOU. HO HO HO HO!

OUR HANDS ARE ALL THAT'S KEEPING IT ON.

NOW, YOUR HEAD HAS BEEN COMPLETELY SLICED OFF.

MY HEAD'S NOT ATTACHED.

THAT WOMAN'S A WITCH... SHE CUT MY HEAD OFF WITH HER WITCH HAIR...

IF MY HEAD SLIPS JUST A LITTLE BECAUSE OF THE SHAKING IN MY HANDS, I'LL DIE...

IF I LET GO... MY HEAD WILL FALL OFF...

RIGHT NOW, I'M HOLDING IT DOWN WITH EVERYTHING I HAVE...

THE FLESH OF THE CROSS SECTION OF MY NECK IS SWELLING, AND IT FEELS LIKE THE NERVES AND BLOOD VESSELS COULD COME APART AT ANY SECOND.

I DON'T CARE WHAT KIND OF TRICKS YOU PULL. I'M NOT TAKING YOU BACK.

...WHAT KIND OF BULLSHIT IS THIS?

...

LOOK AT THE CUT.

R-RIGHT. YOU'LL BELIEVE ME IF YOU SEE THE CUT...

PLEASE BELIEVE ME...

IT'S THE TRUTH. IT'S TRUE.

!

ガバッ

I CAN'T ANY-MORE ...

MY HANDS ...

DRIP

EEEE!

SPLRT

HELP ME...

MADOKA ...

AAAAAH!

DOOON'T COME IN!!

NOOO!

HELP ME!

HELP ME!

HELP MEEEE!

...I CALLED AN AMBU-LANCE.

HIS HEAD'S BEEN CUT OFF!! PLEASE HURRY!

...HELLO? I NEED AN AMBU-LANCE.

AAH... I CAN'T FEEL MY HANDS ANYMORE.

AND MY LEGS ARE SHAKING.

SKRK

AAH...THAT'S THE SOUND OF MY CUT VERTEBRAE RUBBING TOGETHER.

IF THEY SLIP JUST A LITTLE, MY NERVES'LL BE DISCON-NECTED.

SKRK

SO HEAVY ...

I CAN'T BELIEVE HOW HEAVY MY HEAD IS.

MAYBE SIT DOWN?

TOMIO ...

YEAH ...

OH.

SOOOO

THUD

AH!

!

SPLCH

TREMBLE TREMBLE

TREMBLE TREMBLE

I DON'T WANT TO DIE LIKE THIS.

AAAH ...

SLUMP

SLIDE

J- JUST NOW...

FOR A MOMENT ...

EEE OOO EEE OOO

TOMIO ...

MOMMYYY!!

HOLD ON!

I-I HAVE TO HOLD ONNNN.

CHEK

YES! COME—

PARAMEDICS! OPEN THE DOOR!

BANG BANG

EEE OOO EEE OOO

OH! IT'S THE AMBU-LANCE!

TOMIO... HANG ON A LITTLE LONGER!

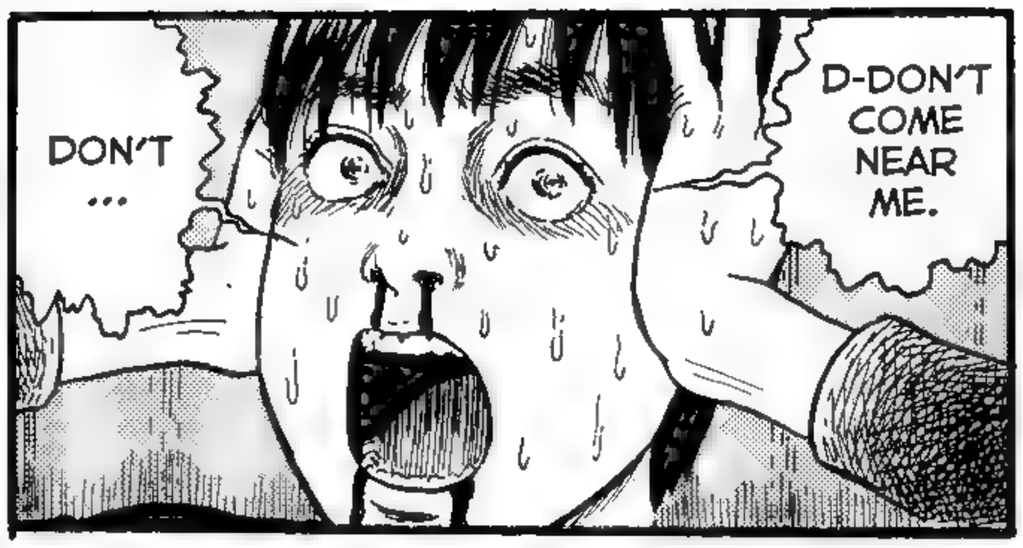
YOU'RE ...

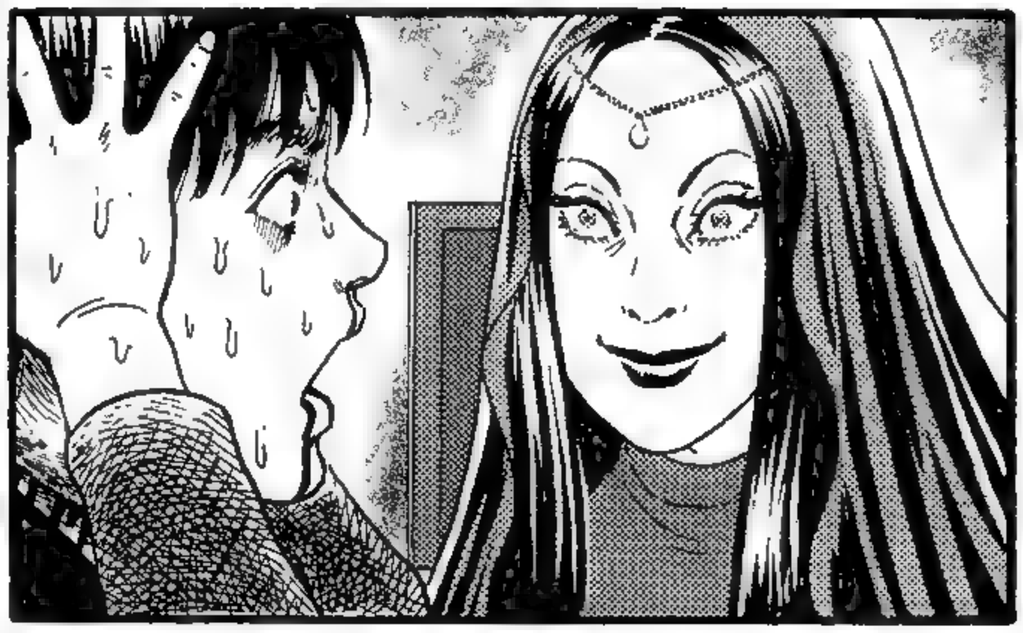
AH!

... WHERE'S THE AMBU-LANCE?

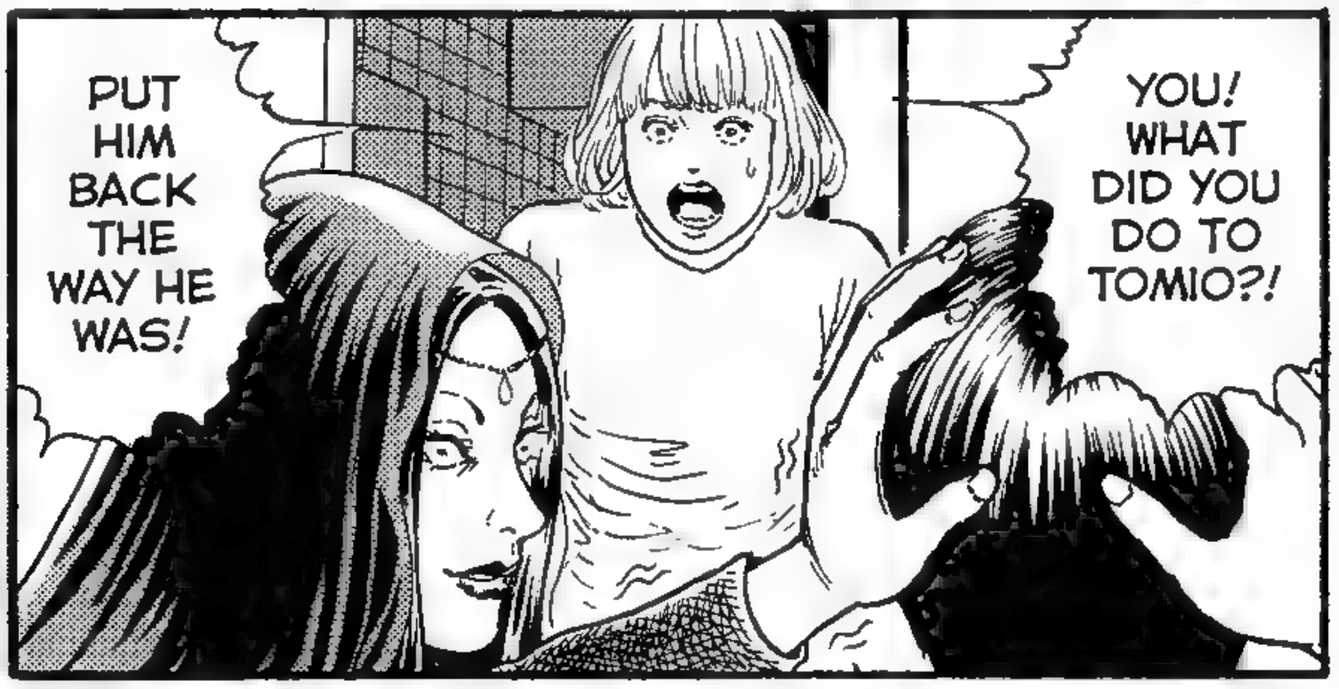
THE AMBU-LANCE ISN'T COMING.

AH!


DON'T ...
D-DON'T COME NEAR ME.



HA HA HA HA!


PUT HIM BACK THE WAY HE WAS!
YOU! WHAT DID YOU DO TO TOMIO?!

WH-WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO?
DEATH

EATH

SHK SHK SHK

DEAT

S-STOP IT!

SHK

AH HA HA HA!

M-MY HAND IS NUMB...

I WONDER WHAT NERVE GOES ALONG HERE.

NGAH...

YOU SHOULDN'T TOUCH ME, MADOKA.

THE MOMENTUM WILL KNOCK HIS HEAD RIGHT OFF.

GET AWAY FROM TOMIO!

STOP IT!

...

...A COCK-ROACH.

AND FOR A COCK-ROACH ...

YOU HAVE A WILL TO LIVE ON PAR WITH A COCK-ROACH'S.

TOMIO, I'VE NEVER MET ANYONE SO STUBBORN BEFORE.

SUCK

EEEEE!

TISK TISK TISK

TISK TISK TISK

CRUSH

EEEAAAAAAAAH!

AH HA HA HA! THAT'S IT! WRITHE IN AGONY!

EEEEE!

IZOYAPI!

WHAM

KUA HA HA HA HA!

...LITTLE BRAT...

YOU...

FWUMP

IT'S OKAY...

...I SWALLOWED IT ALREADY...

TOMIO, WE HAVE TO HURRY AND GET THE COCKROACH OUT...

...IT'D BE GREAT IF THAT BROKE THE CURSE...

I-I KILLED HER...

Y-YOU DID.

KSHHH

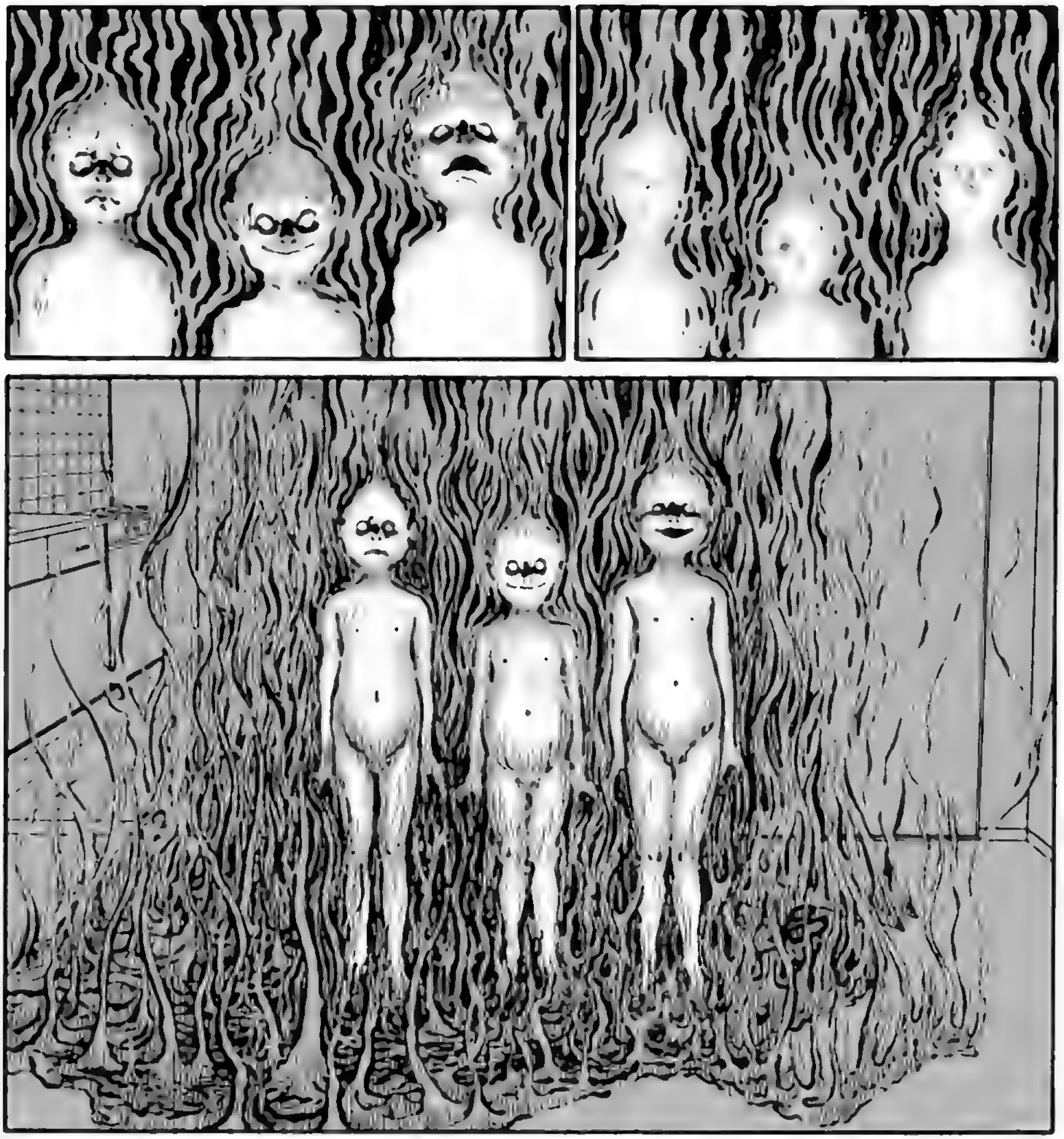
KSHKSH

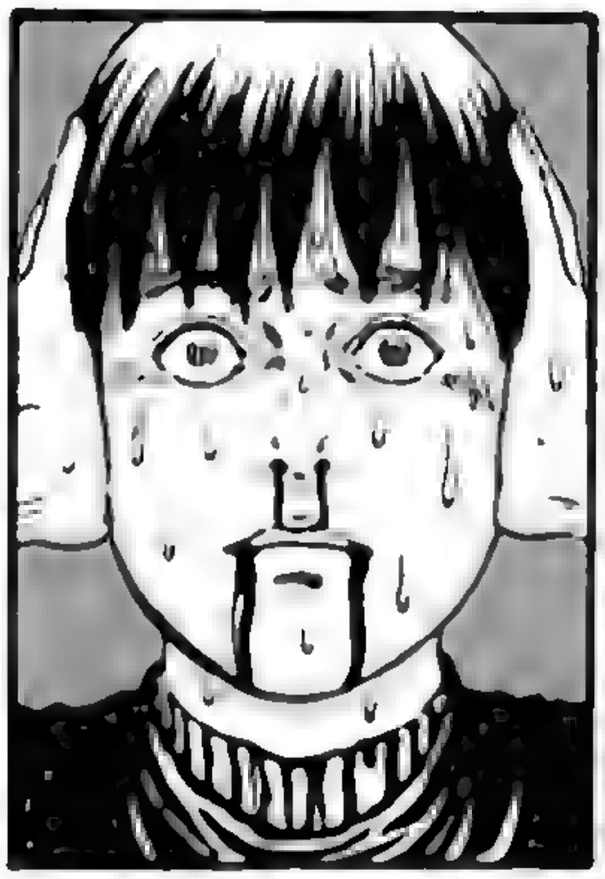
...

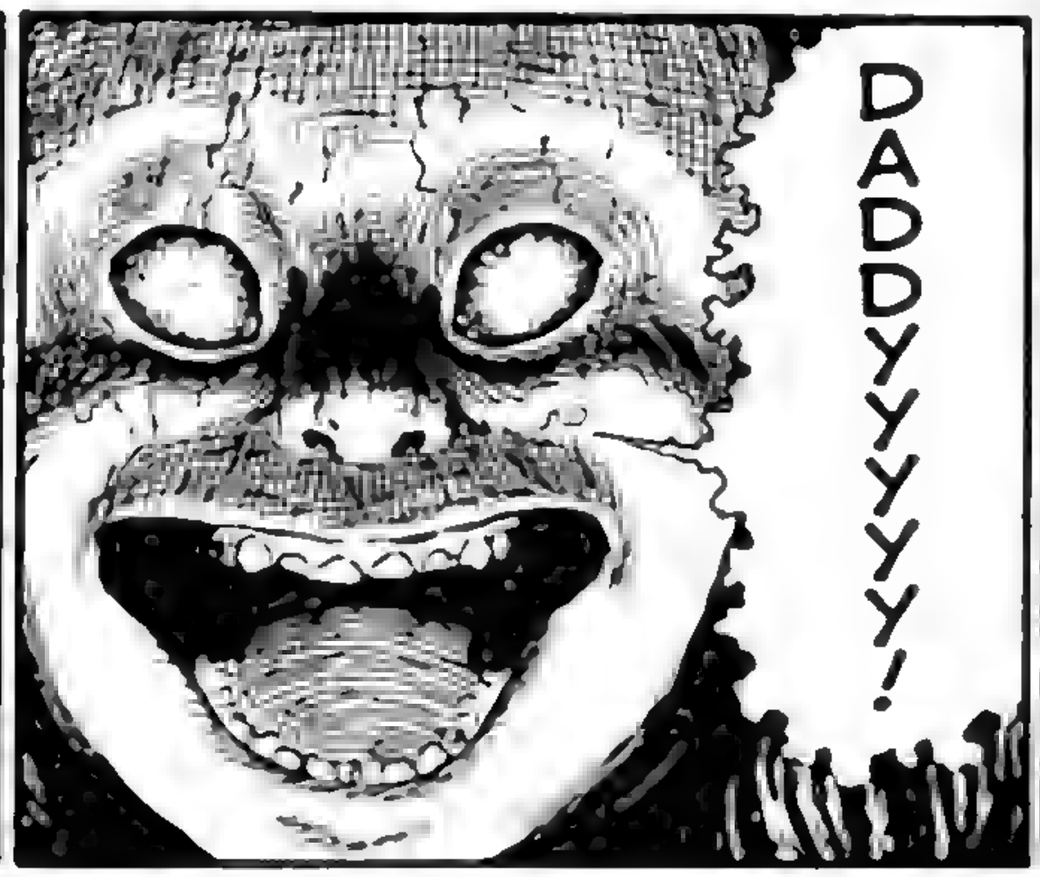
KSHKSHKSH

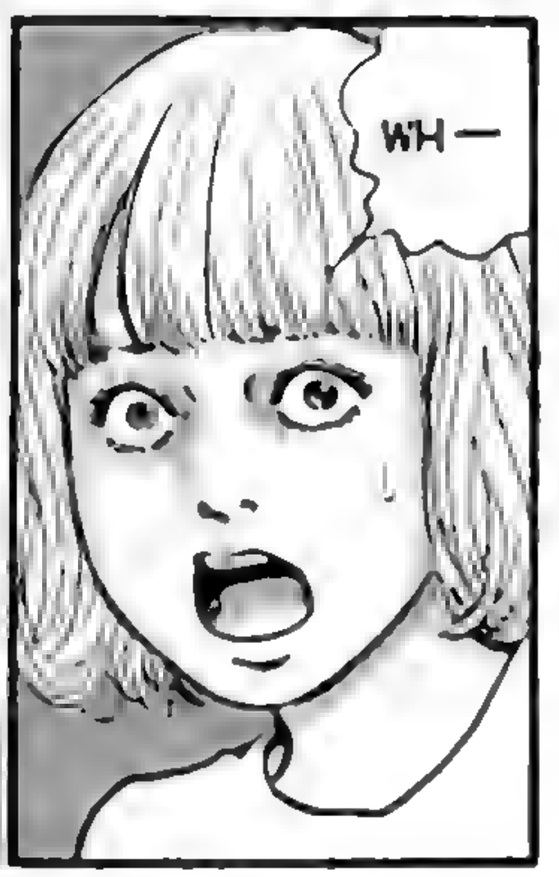
KSHKSHKSH

KSHKSHKSH






DADYYYY!


WH—

I'M NOT YOUR DADDY!

AH! STAY AWAY!

PLAY WITH USSSSS!

DADDYYY!

STOOOP!

WHEE

HEE

WAAAH!

AAAAAAAH!

TOMIO!

UNH ...

AH!

EEAH!

TOMIO... YOU MADE IT!

EVERY-THING'S OKAY NOW!

AH! YOUR HEAD'S ATTACHED!!

HUH ?!

AND YOU JUST KEPT DESPERATELY HOLDING ONTO IT, HUH, TOMIO...

MAYBE THE CHILDREN WERE JUST A HALLUCI-NATION ...

BUT THE WITCH DEFINITELY EXISTED AND REALLY DID CUT YOUR HEAD OFF...

...THE MEMORY OF THE TERROR KEEPS HIS HANDS IN PLACE EVEN NOW.

REGARDLESS OF THE FACT THAT TOMIO'S HEAD IS ATTACHED...

GENTLE GOODBYE

I'VE BEEN DREAMING OF MY FATHER DYING ALL THE TIME, EVER SINCE I WAS LITTLE.

DAAADDYYY, YOU DIED!

RIKO...

HAVING LOST MY MOTHER EARLY...

THE SCARIEST THING IN THE WORLD FOR ME WAS...MY FATHER'S DEATH.

EVEN SO, MY ANXIETY DIDN'T GO AWAY.

YOUR DADDY'S NOT GOING TO DIE, RIKO.

NYAH NYAH BAH!

AT FIRST, I LOVED IT AND PLAYED WITH IT, BUT...

...IN THE END, I LEFT IT IN THE DRAWER.

A DREAM WHERE MY FATHER TURNED INTO A TOY.

I OFTEN DREAMED ANOTHER DREAM.

...MY TOY FATHER WENT OFF SOMEWHERE WITHOUT ME REALIZING.

AND THEN, AS THE LONG MONTHS PASSED...

...WAS TRADITIONAL IN THE PEDIGREED TOKURA FAMILY.

THE OLD-STYLE WEDDING CEREMONY ...

...BUT I HOPE YOU WILL GUIDE ME.

I'M STILL VERY YOUNG AND INEXPE-RIENCED...

GRANDFATHER, GRANDMOTHER.

FATHER, MOTHER.

...

MM-HMM...

...

HM? OH, YES, I GUESS SO, TOMOKA.

I GUESS I HAVE TO START CALLING YOU "SISTER" FROM NOW ON, HUH?

HEY, RIKO!

MY HUSBAND MAKOTO WENT AGAINST THE TOKURA FAMILY'S WISHES AND MARRIED ME.

CHEER UP, RIKO.

THEY'LL COME AROUND EVENTU-ALLY.

MY GREAT-GRANDFATHER AND GREAT-GRANDMOTHER.

THEY'RE OLD NOW, SO THEY DIDN'T COME TO THE CEREMONY.

GREAT-GRANDPA, GREAT-GRANDMA.

THIS IS MY WIFE, RIKO.

IT'S LOVELY TO MEET YOU.

...

RIKO... YOU'RE HAPPY WITH MAKOTO.

I'M RIGHT HERE, DADDY.

RIKO... RIKO...

FWUMP

AAA!

DADDYYY!

I'M SORRY, MAKOTO... ALWAYS HAVING THIS SAME NIGHTMARE...

IT'S OKAY. NOW, GO BACK TO SLEEP.

OKAY.

DADDY... DADDY...

RIKO...YOU DREAMED OF YOUR FATHER'S DEATH AGAIN, DIDN'T YOU?

...

HA HA HA!

DON'T LAUGH! YOU EITHER, DAD. OR YOU, GRANDMA AND GRANDPA.

HA HA HA HA!

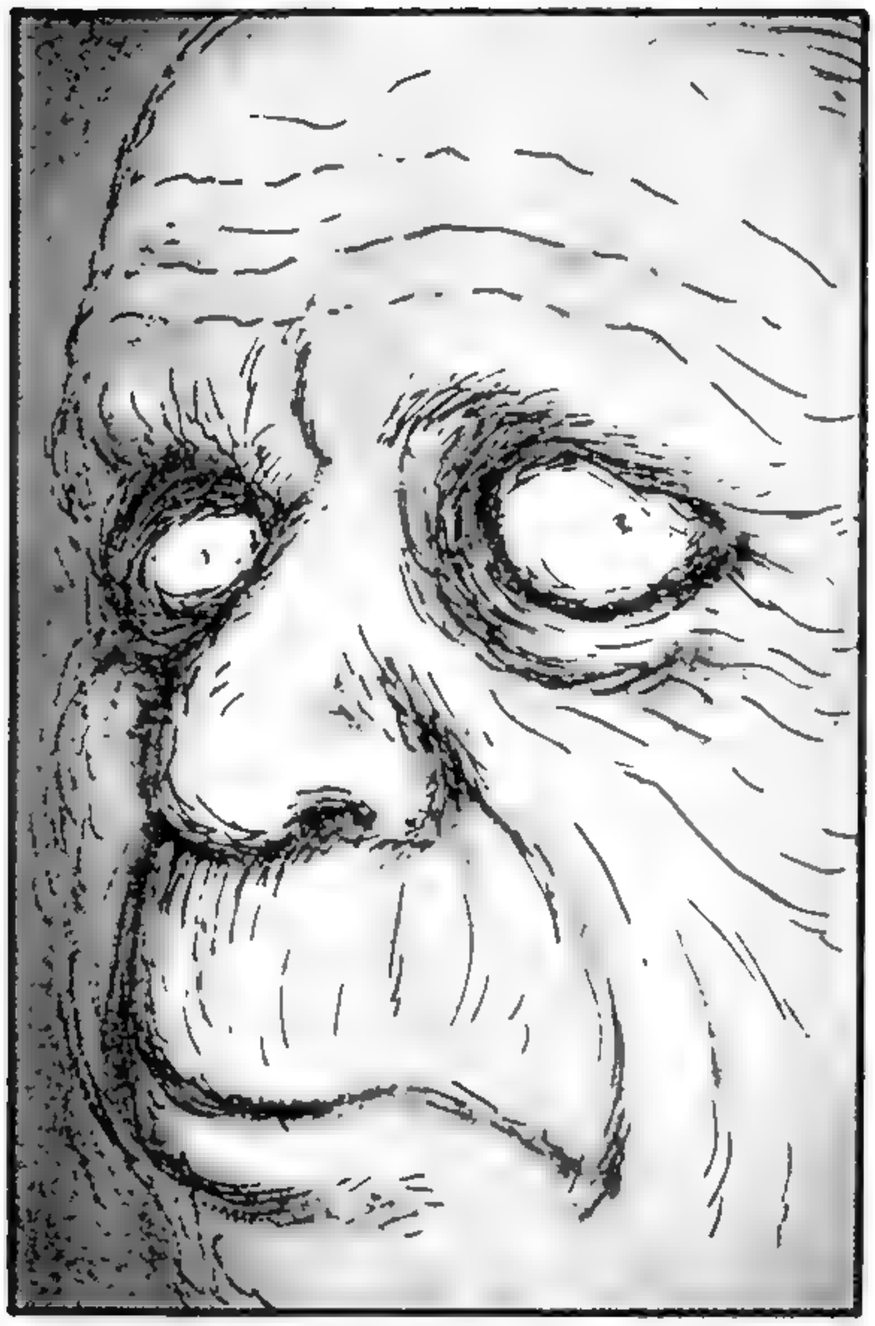
BUT I MEAN, MOM...

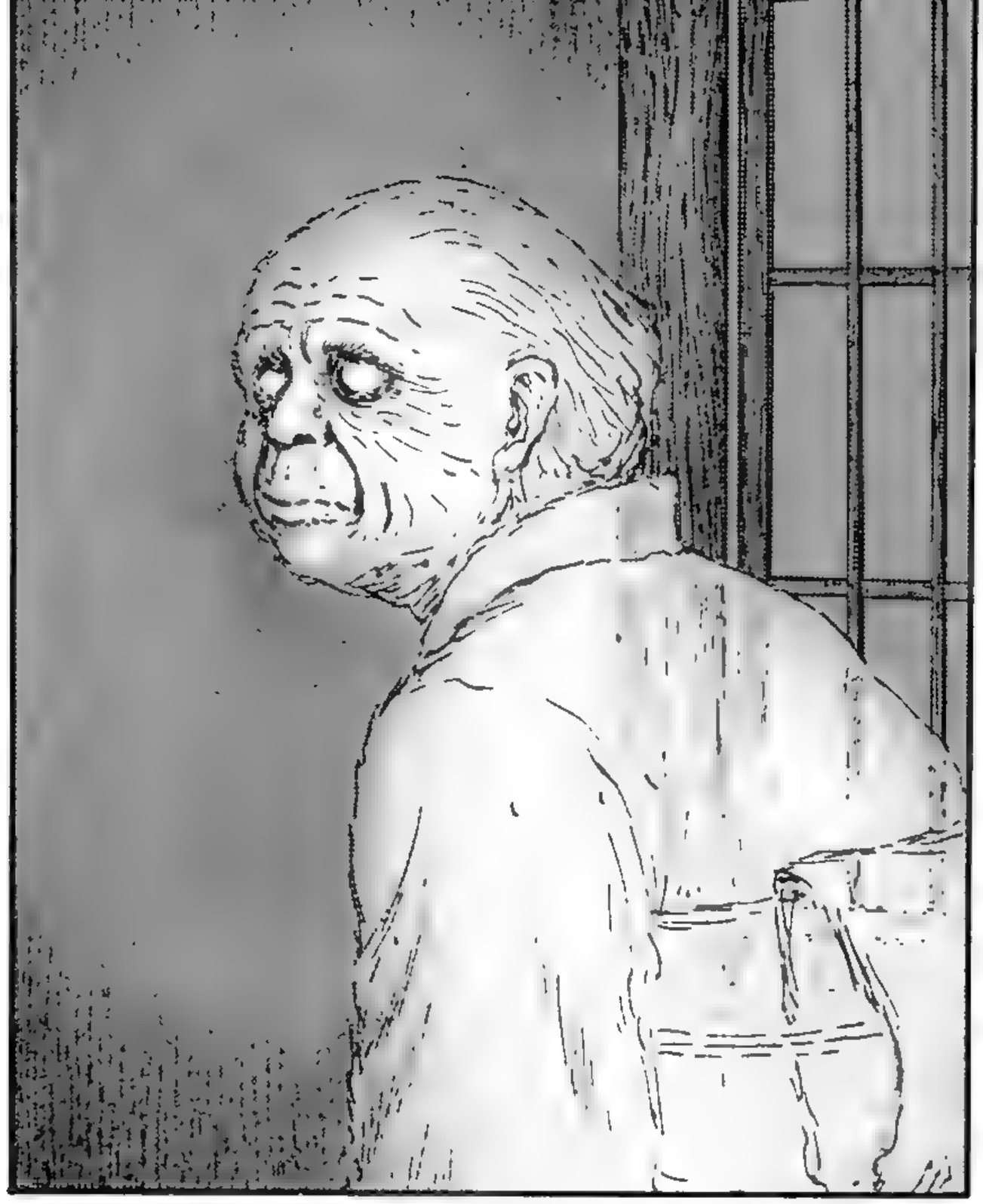
AH HA HA HA! HONESTLY, TOMOKA!

HA HA HA!

...STILL, IT'S A PRETTY BIG HOUSE...

WH- WHO'S THERE?





EEAH!

A G-G-GHOST...
AH! ...GREAT-GRANDFATHER, GREAT-GRANDMOTHER.

THAT'S NOT A GHOST.

RIKO.

MY GREAT-GRANDFATHER'S MOTHER.

WHAT YOU THOUGHT WAS A GHOST WAS PROBABLY MY GREAT-GREAT-GRANDMOTHER...

AND, WHEN I LOOKED CLOSELY AT YOUR GREAT-GRANDPARENTS ...

BUT... THEN WHAT IS IT?

...

A HUNDRED AND TWENTY-FIVE?!

ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY-FIVE.

HOW OLD IS SHE?!

YOUR GREAT-GREAT-GRANDMOTHER? SHE'S STILL ALIVE?!

...IN ADDITION TO MY GREAT-GREAT-GRANDMOTHER, MY GREAT-AUNT AND MY GREAT-UNCLE ARE ALSO HERE.

AND I DON'T THINK YOU'VE MET THEM YET, BUT...

S-SUCH AN ELDERLY WOMAN...

TRANSLU-CENT?!

IF YOU LOOK FOR THEM, THOUGH, I THINK YOU CAN STILL FIND THEM.

ALTHOUGH THEY'VE GOTTEN PRETTY HAZY NOW; THEY'RE NEARLY TRANSLUCENT.

WHY DO THEY VANISH?!

WH-WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?

...THEY'VE COM-PLETELY VANISHED NOW.

MY GREAT-GREAT-GRANDFATHER AND HIS MOTHER ALSO USED TO BE HERE, BUT...

AFTER-IMAGES?

...

BECAUSE THEY'RE AFTERIMAGES.

MY GRANDFATHER-IN-LAW PASSED AWAY THE FOLLOWING YEAR.

御霊堂

GONG GONG GONG GONG GONG

UH-HUH...

RIKO, IS THE FAMILY TAKING GOOD CARE OF YOU?

THANKS FOR COMING TODAY, DADDY.

DON'T WORRY, FATHER, I WILL.

WELL THEN, MAKOTO, PLEASE TAKE GOOD CARE OF MY RIKO.

OKAY, RIKO, THERE'S A GATHERING OF THE ENTIRE TOKURA FAMILY IN THE LIVING ROOM NOW.

WE'RE FINALLY ABOUT TO START.

THIS IS YOUR FIRST TIME, ISN'T IT, RIKO?

PLEASE PRAY FERVENTLY, VERY FERVENTLY!

EVERYONE! PLEASE COME TOGETHER AND THINK VERY STRONGLY OF RYOZO.

I'D FINALLY LIKE TO GET STARTED NOW.

THE SERVICE FOR MY FATHER RYOZO CONCLUDED WITHOUT INCIDENT.

NOW! EVERYONE! PRAY FERVENTLY! FERVENTLY!!

...THE IMAGE OF RYOZO AS HE WAS IN LIFE WILL RETURN THROUGH THE PRAYERS OF HIS KIN!

RYOZO HAS BEEN CREMATED, BUT...

GRANDPAAA!

DAAAAAD!

RYO!

DAD!

YOU'RE HERE FOR US NOW, RYO.

WELCOME HOME, GRANDPA!

DAAAAAD!

SO IT'S NOT THAT THEY ACTUALLY PHYSICALLY EXIST.

IT'S AN IMAGE THAT THE PRAYER OF OUR FAMILY CREATED. WE CALL IT AN "AFTERIMAGE"...

WE TALKED ABOUT THIS BEFORE TOO. GRANDPA DIDN'T COME BACK TO LIFE.

AND IT'S NOT LIKE HE TURNED INTO A GHOST EITHER.

IT'S PROBABLY JUST OUR OWN DELUSION, THOUGH.

YOU TALK TO THEM, BUT NO ANSWER EVER COMES BACK THAT SURPASSES THE EXPECTATIONS OF THE LIVING.

BUT WE FEEL LIKE WE'RE TOUCHING THEM, WE FEEL LIKE WE'RE TALKING WITH THEM.

ONLY...

AND THEN THE AFTERIMAGE LIVES AS PART OF THE FAMILY JUST AS THE LIVING RELATIVE HAD BEFORE.

THE AFTERIMAGE FILLS THAT HOLE IN OUR HEARTS LEFT BY THE RELATIVE WE'VE LOST.

BUT... WE STILL CREATE THE AFTERIMAGE OF OUR RELATIVES.

AFTER THAT, NO MATTER HOW HARD YOU PRAY, YOU CAN'T CREATE ANOTHER AFTERIMAGE OF THE SAME PERSON AGAIN.

BUT THOSE TWENTY YEARS GIVE US THE TIME TO SAY A GENTLE GOODBYE TO OUR DEAD, THE TIME FOR A COMFORTABLE GOODBYE.

AND THEN, AFTER ABOUT TWENTY YEARS, THEY VANISH.

THE IMAGE DE-GRADES ...

WITH THE PASSING DAYS AND MONTHS, THE IMAGE GRADUALLY GROWS HAZIER, AND THEIR EXISTENCE MORE TENUOUS.

THEY'VE HAD PLENTY OF TIME FOR THEIR GOODBYES OVER THESE TWENTY-TWO YEARS!

IT'S NEARLY TWENTY-TWO YEARS SINCE MY GREAT-GREAT-GRANDMOTHER BECAME AN AFTERIMAGE. IF SHE WERE ALIVE, SHE'D BE A HUNDRED AND TWENTY-FIVE...SHE'LL PROBABLY VANISH SOON.

I DIDN'T FROM THE START, BUT NOW MY DAD AND MY GRANDMA DON'T NEED MY GREAT-GREAT-GRANDMOTHER ANYMORE.

HEY, MAKOTO ...

CAN I ASK YOU A FAVOR?

...WILL YOU MAKE HIS AFTERIMAGE?

WHEN MY FATHER DIES IN THE FUTURE...

I MEAN, YOU ESPECIALLY WOULD NEED THE AFTERIMAGE OF YOUR DAD.

I THOUGHT YOU MIGHT ASK THAT.

I'LL TALK TO MY DAD TONIGHT. BUT DON'T GET YOUR HOPES TOO HIGH, OKAY?

...BUT I CAN'T DO ANYTHING ALL BY MYSELF.

TO MAKE THE AFTERIMAGE, YOU NEED THE CONCERTED EFFORT OF THE ENTIRE FAMILY.

EXACTLY! WE SHOULDN'T EVEN BE TALKING ABOUT THIS!

WHY ARE YOU BRINGING THIS UP, MAKOTO?

MAKOTO... THIS IS JUST IMPOSSIBLE.

...TO MAKE THE AFTERIMAGE OF RIKO'S FATHER?

JUST WHAT WOULD IT MEAN FOR US...

I WAS WRONG! I APOLOGIZE FOR MY SELFISH REQUEST!!

PLEASE EXCUSE ME!

SISTER.

UNH...
UNH
UNH
UNH.

UNH
UNH
UNH...

I'LL APOLOGIZE TO MOTHER AND FATHER AGAIN TOMORROW.

I KNOW. IT WAS ME BEING SELFISH, TOMOKA.

DESPITE ALL OF THAT, THEY REALLY ARE KIND PEOPLE.

DON'T THINK POORLY OF MOTHER AND FATHER.

THANKS. I LOVE YOU TOO, TOMOKA.

THANKS FOR ALWAYS WATCHING OUT FOR ME.

WELL, I MEAN, I LOVE YOU AND ALL.

?!

RIKO...

SO YOU NOTICED ...

...

HEY, MAKOTO ...

ABOUT TOMOKA ...

MY LITTLE SISTER FELL SICK AND DIED TEN YEARS AGO.

LATELY, HER AFTERIMAGE HAS BEGUN TO GET HAZIER...

THE TRUTH IS, TOMOKA'S AN AFTERIMAGE TOO.

PLEASE FORGIVE RIKO.

SHE'S A GOOD DAUGHTER-IN-LAW, YOU KNOW.

WHAT, TOMOKA?

HEY, MOM.

I'M NOT GONNA GET MARRIED.

THAT'S OKAY, RIGHT?

MOM... I LOVE YOU, MOM.

I WISH I COULD JUST LIVE LIKE THIS WITH YOU.

I KNOW SHE IS, BUT, WELL...

SNIP

YOU CAN STAY WITH YOUR MOM FOREVER. DON'T LEAVE ME...

MMM, I THINK THAT'S OKAY.

DON'T DISAP-PEAR. PLEASE.

HAVING ALREADY BEEN THROUGH SEVERAL FUNERALS, I ALSO PRAYED WITH ALL MY HEART AS A MEMBER OF THE TOKURA FAMILY.

THERE WAS A FUNERAL THE OTHER DAY AT A BRANCH FAMILY, AND AS A FAMILY, WE PERFORMED THE RITUAL OF CALLING THE AFTERIMAGE.

TIME PASSED AND GREAT-GREAT-GRANDMOTHER DISAPPEARED, ALONG WITH THE GREAT-AUNT AND THE GREAT-UNCLE.

THE GREAT-GRANDMOTHER AND GREAT-GRANDFATHER ALSO GRADUALLY FADED INTO SOMETHING LIKE MIST.

I THOUGHT IT WAS PERHAPS BECAUSE I WASN'T TRYING HARD ENOUGH, SO I EXPENDED EVERY EFFORT FOR THEM.

...MY MOTHER- AND FATHER-IN-LAW REMAINED COLD AS USUAL.

BUT EVEN THOUGH EIGHT YEARS HAVE PASSED SINCE WE GOT MARRIED...

I JUST WANTED TO SEE YOU NOW.

HMM? DIDN'T I SAY TO MEET AT THE STATION?

MAKOTO-SAN.

HONEY! YOUR LUNCH!

AND OF COURSE FOR MY HUSBAND ...

KATTAK

THE WOMAN THIS MORNING... THAT WAS MS. MORI FROM YOUR OFFICE, WASN'T IT?

HAVE YOU TWO GOTTEN CLOSE?

HONEY.

I NEED TO TALK TO YOU.

WHAT ARE YOU PLANNING TO DO?

SO...

YEAH...

...

THERE'S NO WAY YOU'RE LEAVING ME!!

N-NO! I—

I'M GOING TO MARRY HER AT SOME POINT.

WHAT AM I PLANNING TO DO...

WHAT DID YOU SAY?!

WH...

YOU'RE TALKING NONSENSE!

WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT? HOW CAN YOU MARRY HER WITHOUT LEAVING ME?

I'M MARRIED TO YOU FOR LIFE. I HAVE A RESPON-SIBILITY.

RIKO, DON'T WORRY... I'M NOT GOING TO LEAVE YOU OR ANYTHING.

AAH!

I SAID DON'T!

SLAP

GIVE ME YOUR CELL PHONE!

DON'T!

I'M GOING TO GO AND TALK WITH HER MYSELF!

I-I'M SORRY, RIKO...

I'M SORRY FOR NOT TELLING YOU BEFORE NOW...

I'M SORRY ...

WHAT?

...

YOU WERE IN A CAR ACCIDENT.

TEN YEARS AGO... RIGHT BEFORE WE GOT MARRIED.

THE DAY BEFORE THE ENGAGE-MENT CEREMONY ...

YOU DIED IMMEDI-ATELY.

TO PLEASE CREATE YOUR AFTERIMAGE!

I BEGGED MY FATHER.

IT WAS JUST SO INCREDIBLY SAD... I GOT SPECIAL PERMISSION.

南無妙法

OF COURSE HE SAID NO. BUT I WENT AROUND AND BOWED MY HEAD TO EACH MEMBER OF THE TOKURA FAMILY.

AND SO WE GOT MARRIED...

STUCK IN THERE BEHIND THE TOMBSTONE SHOULD BE YOUR OWN NAME TABLET.

IKEDA FAMILY TOMB

IF YOU THINK I'M LYING, THEN GO AND TAKE A LOOK AT YOUR FAMILY TOMB.

YOU'RE LYING...

YOU'RE LYING...

I...

SO THEN...

YES... YOU'RE...

...AN AFTER-IMAGE.

I FELT STRANGELY LIGHT WHEN I THOUGHT ABOUT IT.

IN ANOTHER TEN YEARS, I'LL DISAP-PEAR.

I'M AN AFTER-IMAGE...

SISTER!

THE NEXT DAY, I LEFT THE TOKURA HOUSE.

I BOWED OVER AND OVER AND SAID MY GOODBYE TO MY SISTER-IN-LAW.

SISTER...

WHERE ARE YOU GOING?

HAD I EVER DREAMED OF MAKOTO DYING AND WOKEN UP CRYING?

I WAS THE ONE WHO SHOULD HAVE BEEN APOLOGIZ-ING.

WHEN I LOOK BACK ON IT, I WONDER WHAT MAKOTO THOUGHT...

...ABOUT A WIFE WHO CRIED, DREAMING OF HER FATHER'S DEATH ALL THE TIME.

CHAK

I THINK I'LL PROBABLY DISAPPEAR FIRST.

TEN YEARS 'TIL I DISAPPEAR ...

MY FATHER OR ME, I WONDER WHO'LL BE FIRST...

I'M HOME.

DADDY...

RIKO...

WHAT'S WRONG?

GENTLE GOODBYE/END

DISSECTION-CHAN

DISSECTION ROOM

NOW THEN, YOU MEDICAL STUDENTS WILL START YOUR DISSECTION TRAINING TODAY.

CHUO MEDICAL UNIVERSITY

AS STUDENTS OF MEDICINE, YOU MUST BURN THE STRUCTURE OF THE HUMAN BODY INTO YOUR BRAINS.

OVER THE NEXT THREE MONTHS, YOU WILL WORK IN GROUPS OF FOUR WITH ONE CADAVER FOR EACH GROUP.

PRAY!

FIRST OF ALL, A MOMENT OF SILENT PRAYER FOR THESE NOBLE CADAVERS.

ZZZZZ

ZZZZZ

PLEASE TAKE OUT THE CADAVERS.

...NOW, LET'S BEGIN.

ZZZZZ

RIGHT ...

HEY, TATSURO! YOU OPEN IT...

AND HER COLOR'S REALLY GOOD?

ALMOST LIKE SHE'S ALIVE, HUH?

THIS DONOR'S PRETTY YOUNG.

SHE'S REALLY CUTE!

WHAT'S WRONG, TATSURO?

HNG?!

I'M TELLING YOU, IT DID!

THERE'S NO WAY!

WHAT? SHUT UP!

HEY...JUST NOW, THE CADAVER OPENED ITS EYES...

AH!

HEY! QUIT FUSSING AROUND AND GET TO WORK!

THIS BODY'S ALIVE!

IT'S LUKE-WARM.

WHAT'S WRONG, KAMATA?

BUT... THE BODY TEMPERA-TURE—

PROFESSOR? THIS DONOR BODY IS STILL ALIVE!

WHAT? DON'T BE RIDICULOUS!

...IT *IS* WARM. AND THE ELASTICITY OF THIS SKIN...

IT'S NOT LIKE THAT OF A CADAVER PRESERVED IN FORMALIN.

HMM...

HEY, YOU! OPEN YOUR EYES!

HEY!

HM?!

IT DEFINITELY SMILED JUST NOW!

THIS ONE'S ALIVE!

POP

WHAT—? WHO ARE YOU?! WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?!

HOW DID YOU GET IN WITH THE CADAVERS?

LEAP

HOW DID YOU FIGURE IT OUT?

WHAT?!

WH—

I WANT TO BE DISSECTED!

WELL, THIS IS WHERE YOU COME TO BE DISSECTED, RIGHT?

WH-WHAT IS SHE TALKING ABOUT?

I-I'M CALLING THE POLICE!

SHE'S CRAZY!

HURRY UP AND DISSECT ME!

DISSECT ME!

WE'VE LOOKED EVERY-WHERE, BUT SHE'S NOWHERE TO BE FOUND.

SHE'S FAST.

HO HO HO HO HO!

AH! SHE'S RUNNING AWAY!

...IT CAN'T BE.

THAT WAS...

KAMATA! WE'RE HEADING BACK.

EVERYONE, GO BACK TO THE CLASS-ROOM.

WELL, ANYWAY, WE'LL REPORT IT TO THE POLICE.

R-RIGHT.

NEW KIND OF PERVERT, I GUESS.

DEFINITELY NOT SANE.

CHUO MEDICAL

HEY, YOU HEAR? THAT WOMAN SHOWED UP AT ANOTHER MEDICAL SCHOOL, PRETENDING TO BE A CORPSE!

APPAR-ENTLY, SHE WAS SHOUTING, "DISSECT ME."

WE DID SEE HER WITH OUR OWN EYES, THOUGH.

SHE'S ALREADY AN URBAN LEGEND.

ATCH

I HEARD SHE'S SHOWING UP ON STREET CORNERS TOO.

SHE ACCOSTS PASSERS-BY AND DEMANDS THEY DISSECT HER.

THAT WOMAN... THE MORE I THINK ABOUT HER, THE MORE I'M SURE I KNOW THAT FACE...

IT'S DEFINITELY RURIKO TAMIYA!

RIGHT, TATSURO?

HUH? ... RIGHT.

WHAT ARE YOU SPACING OUT ABOUT?

OH... NAH, IT'S NOTHING.

DOCTOR?

LET'S PLAY DOCTOR.

HEY, TATSURO.

YEAH. MY DAD TOLD ME TO BE A DOCTOR.

I MEAN, WHEN YOU GROW UP, YOU'RE GONNA BE A DOCTOR, RIGHT?

LET'S TAKE A LOOK.

DOCTOR, MY STOMACH HURTS.

MY DAD GAVE IT TO ME.

THAT'S REAL, ISN'T IT? WOW!

WHAT? I CAN'T.

HEY, BRING ONE NEXT TIME.

HE'S NOT GONNA GIVE ME A SCALPEL.

SO DID YOU GET A SCALPEL TOO?

IF YOU SNEAK IT OUT, HE'LL NEVER KNOW.

YOU CAN JUST GET ONE FROM YOUR DAD'S CLINIC.

WHAT'S THIS? TATSURO?

YOUR FATHER IS SEEING A PATIENT RIGHT NOW. DID YOU NEED SOMETHING?

KAMATA SURGICAL CLINIC

I'M ON MY WAY HOME ALREADY.

UH-UH. JUST STOPPED BY.

YOU ARE? WELL, BE CAREFUL.

OOH. THE REAL THING REALLY IS AMAZING.

SEE?

IT'S REALLY SHARP, SO BE CAREFUL.

I BROUGHT SOMETHING GOOD WITH ME.

OKAY NOW, HOLD IT TIGHT.

...

GROSS!

WHOA!

SUDDO-ZO

SUDDO-ZO

AAAW.

BYO2

IF YOU DON'T LET ME HAVE IT, I'LL TELL YOUR DAD YOU STOLE IT.

NO WAY!

...BUT I HAVE TO PUT IT BACK.

TO MAKE UP FOR LETTING THE FROG GET AWAY.

HEY, TATSURO. CAN I HAVE THIS SCALPEL?

HNGAAH!

I'LL NEVER TALK TO YOU AGAIN IF YOU LET IT GET AWAY...

READY? HOLD IT DOWN TIGHT THIS TIME.

YOU DO SERIOUSLY SICK THINGS!

YOU GUYS DISSECTED A HAMSTER, RIGHT?

HEY, TATSURO! WHAT ARE YOU AND RURIKO ALWAYS SNEAKING ABOUT?

WE SAW YOU, YOU KNOW.

AND YOU'RE "DISSECTION-KUN"! HAAAH!

EVERYONE'S TALKING ABOUT IT AT SCHOOL! THEY'RE CALLING RURIKO "DISSECTION-CHAN"!

RURIKO'S THE ONE WHO DISSECTS THEM!

I-I DON'T!

YOU'RE IN IT WITH HER.

BUT YOU HOLD 'EM DOWN.

A BIGGER ANIMAL?

WELL, WHATEVER... I WANT TO DISSECT A BIGGER ANIMAL. GIMME A HAND.

O-OF COURSE NOT...!

HEY? HAVE YOU BEEN HIDING FROM ME LATELY?

LET'S JUST STOP ALREADY.

A DOG OR A CAT...

A DOG OR A CAT! FROGS AND MICE ARE BORING NOW.

OH YEAH... THAT'S WHAT I'LL DO.

IF YOU DON'T DO WHAT I SAY, I'LL DISSECT YOU.

NOW I'M EXCITED.

LET'S DISSECT YOU.

I'M GONNA DISSECT YOU!

WAIT UUUUUP!

NO WAY!

SOME-ONE! HELP!

MY STOMACH HURTS!

TATSURO... HELP ME!

UNH!

MY STOMACH HURTS!

OW!

UNNNH!

IT'S BEEN EIGHT YEARS SINCE THEN... AND THEN WE MEET AGAIN LIKE THAT...

THAT'S REALLY SCARY...

SHE'S DEFINITELY STILL FIXATED ON DISSECTION, THOUGH.

WHAT EXACTLY CHANGED IN HER MENTAL STATE?

AND NOW SHE WANTS TO BE DISSECTED HERSELF!

THAK

...

WILL YOU PLEASE DISSECT ME?

I HAVE A SMALL FAVOR TO ASK YOU.

HEY, THE MED STUDENT FROM THE OTHER DAY.

DASH

SLAM

PHEW.

FWK

HOW DID YOU GET IN HERE?!

HU—

BAD

YOU'RE TATSURO, RIGHT?

HEY...

I MEAN, THAT TIME, MY STOMACH REALLY DID HURT. I WAS SUFFERING AND YOU DIDN'T HELP ME.

BUT I THINK YOU WERE A LITTLE TERRIBLE TOO...

I MEAN, YOU SWITCHED SCHOOLS RIGHT AFTER THAT.

I DID A SERIOUSLY TERRIBLE THING TO YOU...I'VE ALWAYS WANTED TO APOLOGIZE.

...I'VE STARTED THINKING THAT RATHER THAN DISSECTING, I'D LIKE TO BE DISSECTED.

BUT AFTER A WHILE, I GOT TIRED OF DISSECTING THINGS. IT WASN'T ENOUGH, AND NOW...

ALTHOUGH I DIDN'T STOP DISSECTING THINGS.

I GOT A LOT OF STOMACH ACHES AFTER THAT. MY CHILDHOOD WAS REALLY HARD.

AAAAAH! I GET TURNED ON JUST IMAGINING IT!

BEING DISSECTED... DON'T YOU THINK IT'S SO MUCH MORE EXCITING THAN DISSECTING?

...

AND TO BE DISSECTED BY MY FIRST LOVE!

AAH! NOW I'M EXCITED!

AND YOU'LL DO A GOOD JOB. YOU'RE IN MED SCHOOL.

I DON'T CARE.

Y-YOU HAVE TO STOP. BEING DISSECTED WILL KILL YOU.

PLK

PLK

OKAY THEN... OPEN MY STOMACH WITH THIS.

HUH?!

AND THEN OBSERVE THEM OH SO CAREFULLY!!

PULL MY INTERNAL ORGANS OUT!!

AAAH!

HURRY AND DISSECT MEEEEE!

PLPLPLP

THAT'S IT.

THIS IS THE GREATER OMENTUM... PULL HERE.

WHEN YOU DO SO, YOU'LL BE ABLE TO SEE THE DIGESTIVE ORGANS.

NOW THEN.

TODAY, WE'LL GET INTO THE PROCESS FOR THE DISSECTION OF THE STOMACH AND OTHER INTERNAL ORGANS.

STRANGE HOW?

AND I SAW A PRETTY STRANGE POST.

I WAS ON THIS DATING SITE YESTERDAY, RIGHT?

HEY, TATSURO ?

HM?

IF YOU'RE NOT FEELING WELL, GO LIE DOWN.

WHAT'S WRONG, KAMATA?

IT HAS TO BE THAT WOMAN, RIGHT?

IT SAID, "I'M LOOKING FOR A SPECIAL SOMEONE TO DISSECT ME!"

OH GOOD GRIEF

WHAT DID YOU SAY...?!

NEIGHBORS CALLED THE POLICE, AND A SERIOUSLY INJURED WOMAN WAS DISCOVERED IN HIS APARTMENT.

THE MAN LIVED IN THE BUILDING WHERE THE STABBING OCCURRED, AND WAS FLAILING AND SCREAMING INCOMPREHENSIBLY.

...A MAN STABBED A WOMAN IN THE STOMACH.

I'M HERE WITH THE SEVEN O'CLOCK NEWS. AT AROUND THREE THIS AFTERNOON, IN A CITY APARTMENT...

POLICE ARE QUESTIONING HIM FOR FURTHER DETAILS.

THE MAN TOLD INVESTIGATORS THAT THE WOMAN ASKED HIM TO DISSECT HER, SO HE DID.

IT APPEARS THE INJURY WAS NOT LIFE THREATEN-ING.

AN AMBULANCE BROUGHT THE WOMAN TO HOSPITAL WHERE SHE UNDERWENT EMERGENCY SURGERY.

THE WOMAN BROKE FREE FROM HOSPITAL STAFF IMMEDIATELY AFTER SURGERY AND EXITED THE BUILDING.

...ACCORDING TO A REPORT THAT JUST CAME IN, THE VICTIM HAS DISAPPEARED FROM THE HOSPITAL.

IN RELATION TO LAST MONTH'S INCIDENT IN WHICH A WOMAN ENTERED THE DISSECTION LAB AT CHUO MEDICAL UNIVERSITY...

THE POLICE ARE CONTINUING TO INVESTIGATE HER WHEREABOUTS.

WHOA!! WHY?!

AND THIS IS JUST A RUMOR, BUT APPARENTLY, THE SURGEONS ALSO LATER SHOWED MENTAL ABNORMALITIES.

DUNNO... WELL, RUMORS ALWAYS EXAG-GERATE THINGS.

I HEARD THE MAN WENT COMPLETELY NUTS AFTER CUTTING HER STOMACH OPEN.

IT HAD TO BE HER!

YOU CAN'T POSSIBLY BE PLANNING TO DO THE SAME THING AGAIN...

WERE YOU SATISFIED ONCE YOUR STOMACH WAS OPENED... HAVE YOU LEARNED YOUR LESSON...

RURIKO TAMIYA... WHERE DID YOU GO AFTER THAT...

IS SHE GOING TO APPEAR BEFORE ME AGAIN AND AGAIN LIKE A BAD DREAM... OR...

...WILL THIS END WITH ME NEVER SEEING HER AGAIN?

TWENTY OR SO YEARS LATER

AFTER A MOMENT OF SILENT PRAYER, PLEASE TAKE THE CADAVERS OUT OF THE DONOR BAGS.

NOW, FOR THE NEXT THREE MONTHS, WE'LL BE DOING DISSECTIONS.

PRAY!

NNNO

NNNO

NNNO

PLEASE TAKE A LOOK AT THIS BODY.

WHAT IS IT?

DOCTOR KAMATA.

THERE ARE JUST SO MANY SUTURE SCARS...

IT TELLS THE STORY OF A WOMAN BATTLING SEVERE ILLNESS, DOESN'T IT?

MM, IT REALLY DOES.

...

HM?!

IT SEEMS SHE TRIED DISSECTION MANY TIMES AS WELL...

SHE'S DEFINITELY DEAD THIS TIME.

AND NOW SHE WILL REALLY BE DISSECTED WITHOUT INTERFERENCE, RIGHT DOWN TO THE HEART...

...RURIKO TAMIYA?

TH-THIS IS...

ALL RIGHT. TODAY, WE'LL BE GETTING INTO DISSECTION OF THE INTERNAL ORGANS.

PLEASE PAY CLOSE ATTENTION TO THE MUSCLES OF THE STOMACH WALL AS YOU PROCEED WITH THE DISSECTION.

YAMATE MEDICAL UNIVERSITY

AH!!

P-PLEASE TAKE A LOOK AT THIS!

WHAT? WHAT'S WRONG?

AH! DOCTOR KAMATA!

TH-THE INTERNAL ORGANS... WHAT ON EARTH...?!

THIS ISN'T IN OUR GROSS ANATOMY TEXT!

ШШАААТ!

!!ААААА

BLACKBIRD

IT...HAPPENED WHEN I WENT OUT BIRD WATCHING FOR THE FIRST TIME IN A WHILE.

HM?

EXCUSE ME! YOU OVER THERE...

I'VE BEEN WAITING FOR AGES.

I WAS HIKING AND FELL. NOW I CAN'T MOVE.

PLEASE HELP ME...

WHAT? THIS IS SERIOUS!

THANK YOU SO MUCH.

KUME ...

WE'LL BE AT THE HOSPITAL SOON! HANG ON!

NO, I JUST LIVE IN THE AREA.

YOU SAID YOUR NAME WAS KUME, YES?

DO YOU KNOW THIS MAN?

SOME TIME MUST HAVE PASSED SINCE THE BREAKS.

YOUR LEGS ARE BROKEN, BUT THE BONES HAVE ALREADY FUSED.

OSPITAL

THAT WAS WHEN YOU FELL, WASN'T IT?

A HIKING PLAN UNDER YOUR NAME WAS POSTED AT THE SHIRO-GANEDAKE TRAILHEAD A MONTH AGO.

I AM.

YOU'RE SHIRO MORIGUCHI FROM TOKYO, YES?

I RATIONED THE FOOD IN MY BACK-PACK...

UHM...

YOUR LEGS WERE BROKEN, YOU COULDN'T MOVE. WHAT DID YOU DO FOR FOOD?

THEN YOU WERE IN THAT PLACE FOR A MONTH.

YES...

...

HOW CAN WE CONTACT YOUR FAMILY?

BUT YOU SEEM IN RELATIVELY GOOD HEALTH.

I SEE... YOU'VE BEEN THROUGH A LOT.

I'M UNEMPLOYED. THERE'S NO ONE TO CALL.

NO ONE CLOSE TO ME.

I HAVE NO FAMILY.

YOU'RE SCHEDULED FOR SURGERY TOMORROW.

THE BONES HAVE FUSED IN THE WRONG POSITION.

EVERYONE'S TALKING ABOUT HOW YOU SURVIVED A MONTH ON THE FOOD IN YOUR BACKPACK.

MORIGUCHI, YOU WERE ON THE NEWS.

WHAT IS IT?

HM?

I HAVE A FAVOR TO ASK YOU.

KUME ...

YOU DON'T LOOK GOOD. WHAT'S WRONG?

HM?

PLEASE!

...PLEASE.

WHAT? WHY...?

...COULD YOU STAY HERE TONIGHT?

I KNOW IT'S A LOT TO ASK, BUT...

GIVEN SHIRO MORGUCHI'S ALARMING STATE...

...I DECIDED TO STAY WITH HIM THAT NIGHT.

OH, DIDN'T MEAN TO BRING UP BAD MEMORIES.

NO, IT'S OKAY.

I DON'T KNOW MY PARENTS.

NO...

SO YOU DON'T HAVE ANY FAMILY. DID YOUR PARENTS PASS?

I DON'T KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT MY PARENTS.

I GREW UP IN AN ORPHANAGE.

I'M ALMOST OUT OF SAVINGS.

ONCE I LEAVE HERE, I'LL HAVE TO GET A JOB...

MY LONE HOBBY IS SOLO HIKING IN THE MOUNTAINS.

I WASN'T CAREFUL, AND THIS HAPPENED.

NO ONE I'M REALLY CLOSE WITH.

BUT YOU MUST HAVE FRIENDS? A GIRL?

ANYWAY, IT'S LIGHTS OUT, SO LET'S GO TO SLEEP.

YOU CAN TALK TO ME ABOUT YOUR TROUBLES. WE HAVE A CONNECTION NOW.

NGH NGH NGH!

LEAP

HNNGH!

HNGH!

UNH!

HM?

UNNNNH...

WHO ARE YOU?!
WH—

PTT

H-HEY, MORIGUCHI... WHAT WAS THAT?

MORIGUCHI, SERIOUSLY, WHAT IS THAT?

MEAT?

IT'S MEAT ...

RAW MEAT...

I'VE BEEN RESCUED... BUT SHE CAME...

SHE CAME AGAIN TONIGHT...

BUT I DON'T NEED THE MEAT ANY-MORE...

I-IT WAS ABOUT A WEEK OR SO AFTER I FELL...

TALK TO ME!

I DON'T UNDERSTAND WHAT'S GOING ON!

AND THEN THAT WOMAN APPEARED.

I WAS UP AGAINST THE EDGE.

UNNH.

THE PAIN WAS INTENSE, NO HELP WAS COMING, AND I WAS ALMOST OUT OF FOOD.

CHMP

AAH...THANK GOD. PLEASE HELP ME.

CHMP CHMP CHMP CHMP CHMP CHMP

CHMP CHMP CHMP

CHMP CHMP

UH...

...

UNH!

GULP

HO HO HO!

THE MOST WONDERFUL FLAVOR FILLED MY STARVING MOUTH. IT SIZZLED.

SHE PUSHED CHEWED-UP RAW MEAT FROM HER MOUTH INTO MINE.

WHO WAS THAT WOMAN...

SHE'S GONE...

AH! HEY! ...PLEASE STOP!

HO HO HO!

HUNGER SWEPT OVER ME ONCE AGAIN AND I WAS TORTURED WITH THIRST.

HAAH.

HAAH.

I ASSUMED SHE WOULDN'T COME AGAIN.

I THOUGHT I WAS SAVED, BUT REALIZED THAT I WASN'T.

RUSTLE

AND THEN, THE NEXT DAY...

CHMP

CHMP

AH!

OLLOO

AND THEN THE WOMAN LEFT AGAIN.

THAT TIME, SHE POURED SOME LUKEWARM LIQUID INTO MY MOUTH.

THAT LIQUID... TASTED LIKE BLOOD.

I OWE HER MY LIFE...

I REALLY NEED TO THANK HER.

AFTER THAT TOO, SHE CAME ALMOST EVERY DAY AND FED ME BLOOD OR MEAT FROM HER MOUTH.

IT'S THANKS TO HER THAT I'M STILL ALIVE.

AND...THIS MEAT, IT TASTED SO INCREDIBLE WHEN I WAS STARVING...

BUT NOW IT'S DISGUSTING ...

IT'S STARTING TO FEEL CREEPIER AND CREEPIER.

BUT...EVEN NOW THAT I'VE BEEN RESCUED, SHE COMES AT NIGHT TO FEED ME...

...

I DON'T KNOW... JUST...

I FEEL LIKE IT'S SOMETHING I SHOULDN'T BE EATING...

I WONDER WHAT KIND OF MEAT IT IS?

WELL, YEAH. A STRANGE WOMAN FEEDING YOU FROM HER MOUTH IS KIND OF DISGUSTING.

SHIRO MORIGUCHI WAS TERRIFIED, SO I DECIDED TO STAY WITH HIM FOR A WHILE.

AND THEN THE NEXT NIGHT...

HNGH NGH!

HNGH!

UNH ...

STOP!

Y-YOU ...

HNGH!

PLEH!

AH! WAIT!

HO HO HO HO HO!

AAH!

AFTER-HOURS ENTRY

YOU!

FLAP FLAP

AAH!

I-I MUST BE DREAMING?!

FLAP FLAP

HOSPITAL

THE WOMAN DIDN'T APPEAR AGAIN AFTER THAT.

I LEFT OUT THE PART WHERE SHE FLEW OFF INTO THE NIGHT SKY...

Traffic Division

Drivers Licenses

THE NEXT DAY, I FILED A POLICE REPORT ABOUT THE WOMAN. ALONG WITH THE "MEAT"...

DON'T WORRY. SHE'S NOT COMING BACK!

SHE THOUGHT I WAS HER CHICK...

SHE WAS FEEDING HER CHICK.

SHE'S A BIRD-MONSTER...

I'M SCARED! THAT WOMAN IS A MONSTER!

IT'S A MIRACLE THAT I LIVED.

WHEN I WAS A BABY I WAS LEFT IN THE CORNER OF A PARK FOR A WEEK OR SO.

MAYBE THAT MONSTER WAS FEEDING ME THEN TOO...

KUME... I WAS ABANDONED...

OH! YES.

ARE YOU TWO MORIGUCHI AND KUME?

I WANTED TO ASK YOU A FEW QUESTIONS ABOUT THAT MEAT...THE TRUTH IS...

I'M WITH THE POLICE.

WHAT?!

THEY'RE BOTH FROM THE SAME PERSON.

AS A RESULT OF DNA ANALYSIS, WE'VE DETERMINED THAT...

...THE MEAT AND THE EYEBALL ARE OF HUMAN ORIGIN.

HRRK!

WE WERE QUESTIONED FOR A LONG TIME.

THE DETECTIVE SUSPECTED US, BUT ALL WE COULD DO WAS TELL HIM WHAT WE KNEW.

TELL ME ONE MORE TIME HOW YOU CAME INTO POSSESSION OF THIS MEAT.

AND THEY NEVER FOUND THE BODY THE FLESH AND EYE BELONGED TO.

THE WOMAN DIDN'T APPEAR AFTER THAT.

...I WANT TO GET AWAY FROM THE SHADOW OF THAT WOMAN.

I'M SORRY. I APPRECIATE THE THOUGHT, BUT...

TOO BAD YOU DON'T LIVE HERE. I COULD INTRODUCE YOU TO SOME PEOPLE.

ARE YOU GOING TO LOOK FOR WORK BACK IN TOKYO?

THANK YOU FOR EVERYTHING YOU'VE DONE FOR ME.

MORIGUCHI, CONGRATS ON YOUR RECOVERY.

K-A-T-UNK

K-A-T-UNK

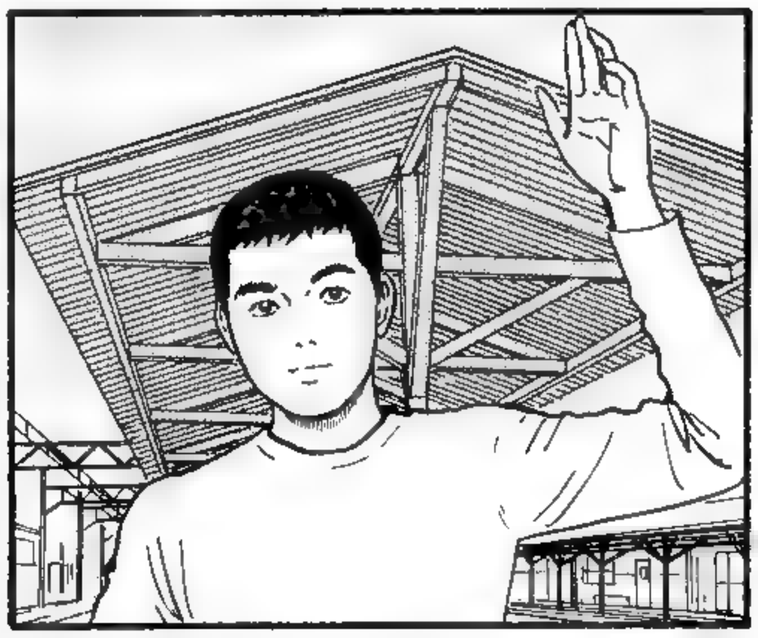
WELL, TAKE CARE!

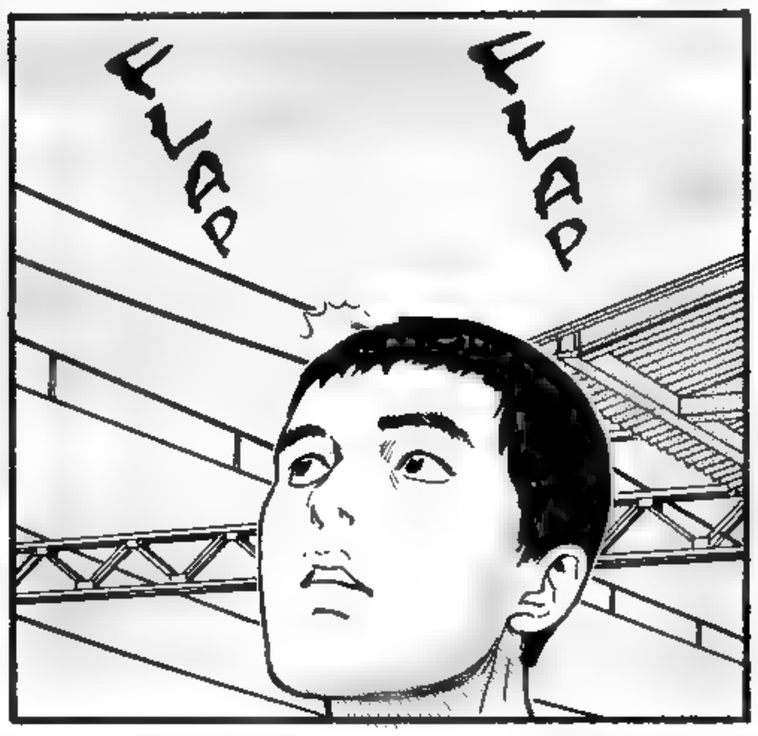
RIGHT ...

I WILL.

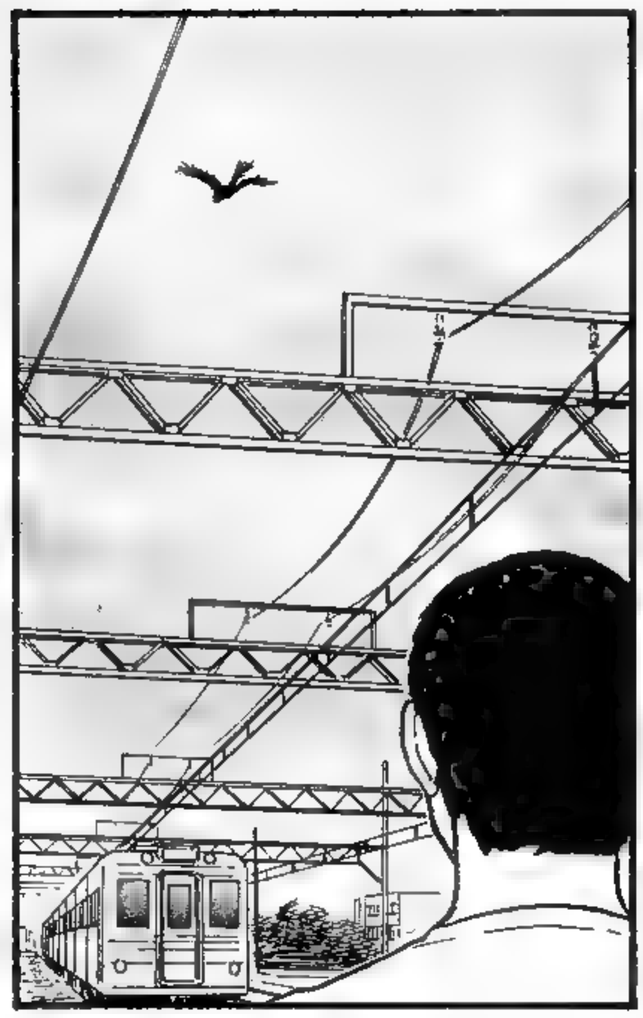
FLAP

FLAP

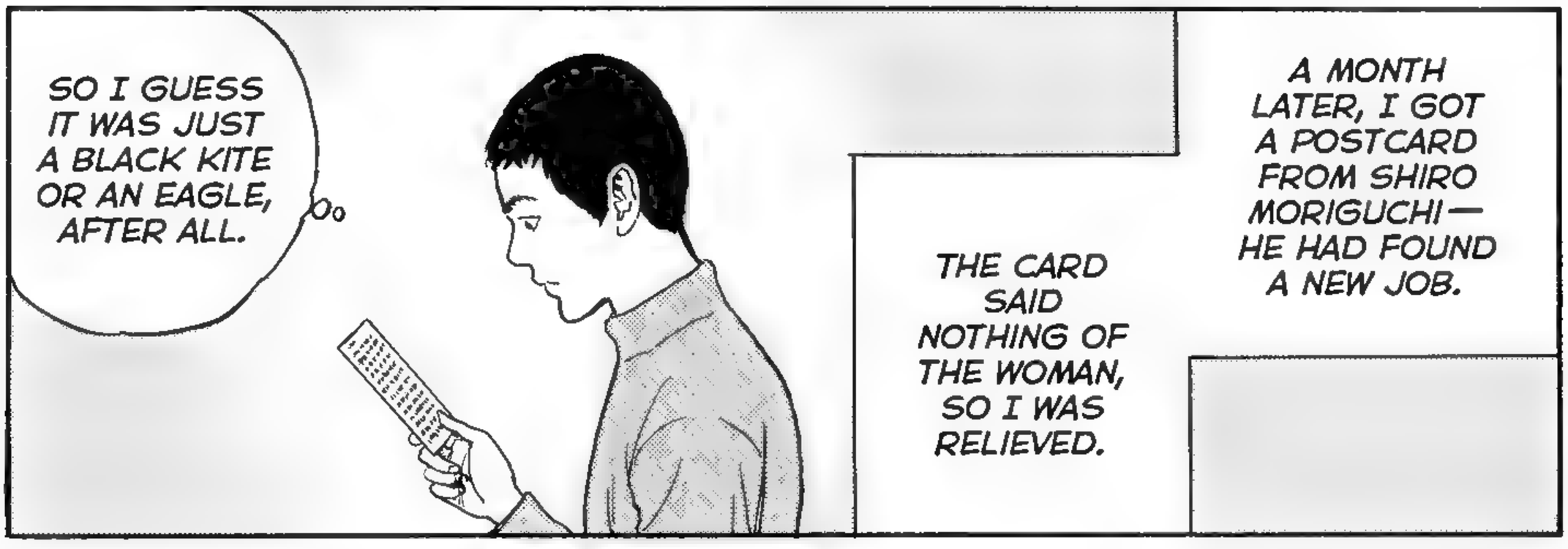



FLAP
FLAP

N-NO WAY...



FLAP
FLAP


SO I GUESS IT WAS JUST A BLACK KITE OR AN EAGLE, AFTER ALL.
THE CARD SAID NOTHING OF THE WOMAN, SO I WAS RELIEVED.
A MONTH LATER, I GOT A POSTCARD FROM SHIRO MORIGUCHI— HE HAD FOUND A NEW JOB.

A FEW YEARS LATER, SHIRO MORIGUCHI'S CORPSE WAS DISCOVERED...

...IN A FROZEN HOLLOW ON THE SUMMIT OF MOUNT FUJI.

SHIRO'S POSSESSIONS WERE FOUND NEAR THE BODY...

AND DNA TESTING CONFIRMED THAT IT WAS INDEED HIM.

THEY SAY THAT WHEN HE WAS FOUND, A HUGE BLACK BIRD WAS PECKING AT THE CORPSE, BUT THE TRUTH OF THAT IS UNCONFIRMED.

...WAS A PERFECT MATCH FOR SHIRO'S OWN DNA.

APPARENTLY, THE DNA FROM THE MEAT THE WOMAN HAD FED SHIRO A FEW YEARS EARLIER...

WEEKLY AS

BUT CERTAIN FACTS LEAKED BY THE POLICE TO THE MEDIA IN THE AFTERMATH BAFFLED PEOPLE.

WHAT FOLLOWS ARE THE FINAL SECTIONS OF THE JOURNAL FOUND AMONG SHIRO'S POSSESSIONS.

Diary

SHIRO WAS FED HIS OWN FLESH.

HOW ON EARTH COULD THIS BE?

"SHE GOT INTO MY LOCKED ROOM.

August 8

That woman showed up!

I thought she wouldn't, and yet...

into my locked room

How?!

in?!

"HOW ON EARTH DID SHE GET IN?!"

"AUGUST 8. THAT WOMAN SHOWED UP!! I THOUGHT SHE WOULDN'T, AND YET...

DON'T FEED ME ANYMORE.

I'M NOT STARVING.

BRAM

CHOMP

"I'VE DECIDED TO FLEE OVERSEAS!!"

"AUGUST 9. WHY?! THE WOMAN TORE INTO MY FLESH!!

"IF I DON'T ESCAPE, SHE'LL KILL ME!! BUT WHERE CAN I GO?!

AAAAAH !!

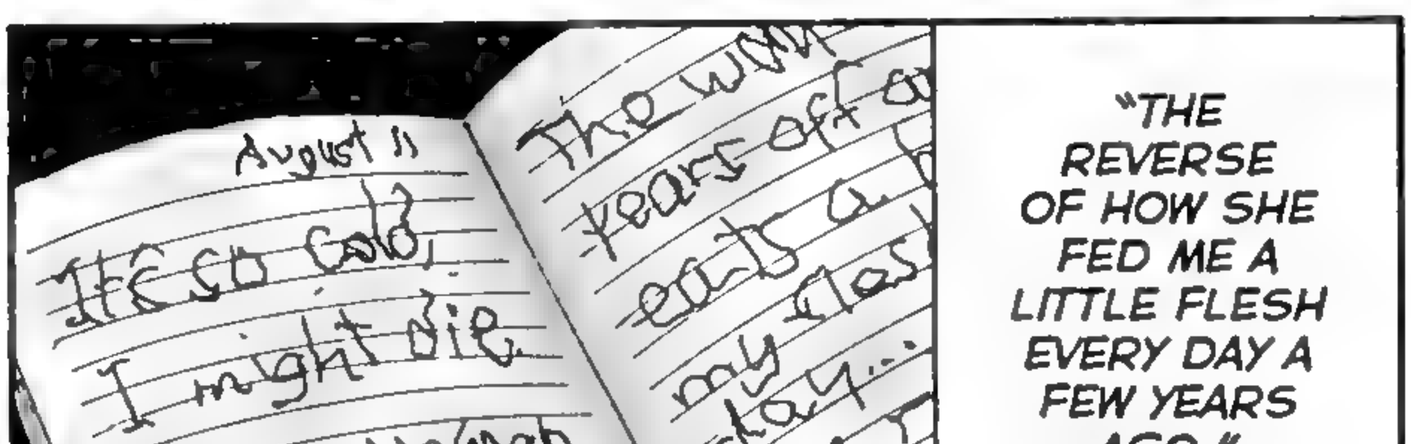
"SHE RIPPED THE FLESH OF MY LEFT THIGH WITH HER SHARP TEETH!! I CAN'T WALK ANYMORE..."

"AUGUST 10. AAH, I NEED HELP!! THAT MONSTER'S CAPTURED ME AND BROUGHT ME UP TO A CRATER ON MOUNT FUJI!!

...THE JOURNAL ENDS THERE.

"THE WOMAN TEARS OFF AND EATS A BIT OF MY FLESH EVERY DAY...

"AUGUST 11. IT'S SO COLD, I MIGHT DIE. THE WOMAN CAME AGAIN TODAY.



"THE REVERSE OF HOW SHE FED ME A LITTLE FLESH EVERY DAY A FEW YEARS AGO."

CHIRP
CHIRP
TWEET
TWEET
...SHE MUST HAVE GONE BACK IN TIME TO BRING HIM HIS OWN FLESH...
IF THE MEAT SHE FED SHIRO MORIGUCHI WAS SHIRO'S FLESH, THEN...
CHIRP
CHIRP
KIYA-K

HMM...

AAH!

HNNGH ...

AH... MY LEG!

IT'S BROKEN ...

FALL

AAAAAAAH!

FLAP FLAP FLAP FLAP

FLAP FLAP

CHMP

CHMP

CHMP

CHMP

SWAN

CHMP

CHMP

CHMP

CHMP

NO!

N—

...MEAT HAD A VERY UNPLEASANT TASTE...

THE...

BLACKBIRD/END

MAGAMI NANAKUSE

WITH THEIR ADDICTIVE STYLE, NANAKUSE'S NOVELS SELECT THEIR READERS.

THOSE IN THE KNOW ARE AWARE THAT MAGAMI NANAKUSE IS A BRILLIANT NOVELIST.

RECENT AUTHOR PHOTO-GRAPH

I'M A QUIRKY WOMAN WHO LOVES SOLITUDE AND WANTS TO WRITE.

I'M ONE OF HER FANS. MY NAME'S KAORU KOKETSU.

SOLITUDE HABITS Magami Nanakuse

I CAN'T EVEN STAND IT. SHE REALLY IS HABIT-FORMING.

SHE REALLY DOES BECOME A HABIT ONCE YOU GET INTO THIS AUTHOR.

DRINKING HABITS Magami Nanakuse Magami Nanakuse's intense debut work!

MAGAMI ITCHING FOR A MAN NANAKUSE

MAGAMI NANAKUSE STICKY FINGERS

Magami Nanakuse CLEANLIN

For Kiyono cleanliness was an obsession.

48 AGAINST 7 MAGAMI NANAKUSE

NANAKUSE BELONGS JUST TO ME.

LUCKILY, THERE'S NOT A SINGLE NANAKUSE FAN AROUND.

DRINKING HABITS, STICKY FINGERS, ITCHING FOR A MAN, CLEANLINESS AND MANY MORE.

IF I WASN'T SO OBSESSED WITH MAGAMI NANAKUSE, I'D HAVE A MORE WHOLESOME ADOLESCENCE.

NO USE NOW!

AFTER I READ ONE OF HER BOOKS I TALK AND ACT LIKE HER CHARACTERS FOR A WHILE.

QUITE ABSURD!

IT'S NOT JUST NANAKUSE'S WRITING THAT'S GOT ITS LITTLE QUIRKS—THE CHARACTERS THEMSELVES ALSO HAVE WEIRD TICS.

HOW DID MAGAMI NANAKUSE SO THOR-OUGHLY TURN MY LIFE UPSIDE DOWN?!

...I'VE BEEN PRETTY HOPELESS UP TO NOW.

INSPIRED BY NANAKUSE, I'M TRYING TO BE A WRITER, BUT...

Kaoru Koketsu

Bring your work and come hang out.

Magami NanaKuse

I SENT A FAN LETTER AND SHE ANSWERED ME!

SERIOUSLY ?!

AND NO ONE KNEW THAT I WAS GOING TO MEET NANAKUSE. TAKE THAT!

I CAN'T BELIEVE I'M GONNA MEET MAGAMI NANAKUSE!

BABUMP

AAH, MY HEART'S BEATING SO FAST!

BABUMP

WEIRD THAT SHE LIVES FAR UP IN THE MOUNTAINS THOUGH.

VRRRRRRM

SOME-ONE'S TO MEET ME, BUT...

OKAYAMA

I'M HERE TO PICK YOU UP.

YOU'RE KAORU KOKETSU, YES?

OH! I DO.

I'M A HUGE FAN OF NANAKUSE SENSEI, SO...

SO YOU... I HEARD YOU WANT TO BE A WRITER?

THIS WAY.

EE HEE HEE!

A KUSECHI, YOU SEE, IS A PLACE WHERE DISASTER FALLS WHEN YOU ENTER IT.

HM. WELL, TOUGH TO COME ALL THIS WAY TO THIS *KUSECHI*.

HUH... "KUSECHI"?

OHH.

EXCUSE ME.

I AM A LIVE-IN STUDENT OF NANAKUSE SENSEI.

DO I LOOK THAT OLD?

NOT TO BE RUDE, BUT ARE YOU NANAKUSE SENSEI'S MOTHER?

COME ON IN.

SLAM

BRING HER IN.

MS. KOKETSU HAS ARRIVED.

SENSEI.

...

ALL THE WAY TO A KUSECHI.

KAORU, RIGHT? THANKS FOR COMING.

SHE'S A MAN ...?!

I NEVER THOUGHT I'D GET TO MEET YOU. IT'S A DREAM!

OH...OHHH! UM, YES, I'M KOKETSU. THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR INVITING ME.

UM.

UH...

AND ON TOP OF THAT, THAT YOU WOULD LOOK AT MY WORK!

YOU DON'T EVEN HAVE ANY REAL TALENT!

WHAT?

QUITE ABSURD THAT I'D WANT TO SEE YOUR WORK.

I KNEW THE MOMENT I READ YOUR LETTER THAT YOU WERE TALENTLESS!

GEH!

TREMBLE SHAKE

TREMBLE SHAKE

YOU'RE A TIC FAKER!

PSSSSSSSSSS

PUSH

POP

POP

STAGGER

SLUMP

MY GOODNESS! YOU'VE WET YOURSELF. WE CALL THAT BAD BATHROOM HABITS!

AAAH!

UUNH! UNH!

FOR ME, CLEANLINESS IS AN OBSESSION!

HEY THERE! YOU'RE GETTING THE FLOOR DIRTY!

HO! HO! HO!

UUNH! UUNH!

SHAKE SHAKE

KAAAA

SZORT

SNORT

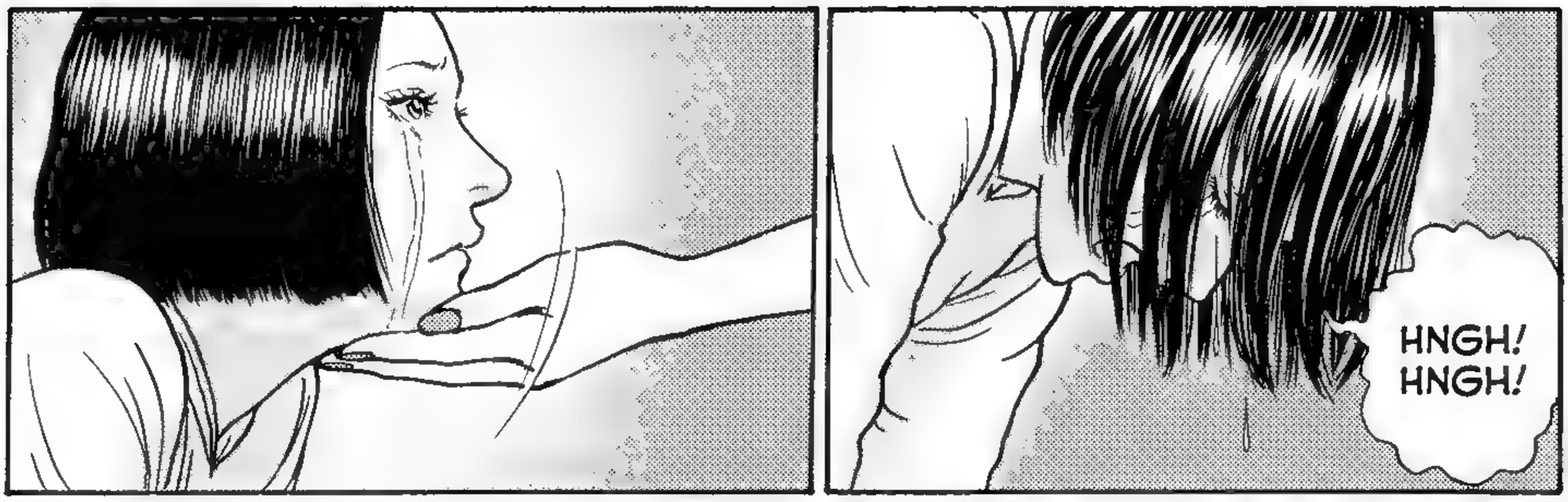
AAAAH...

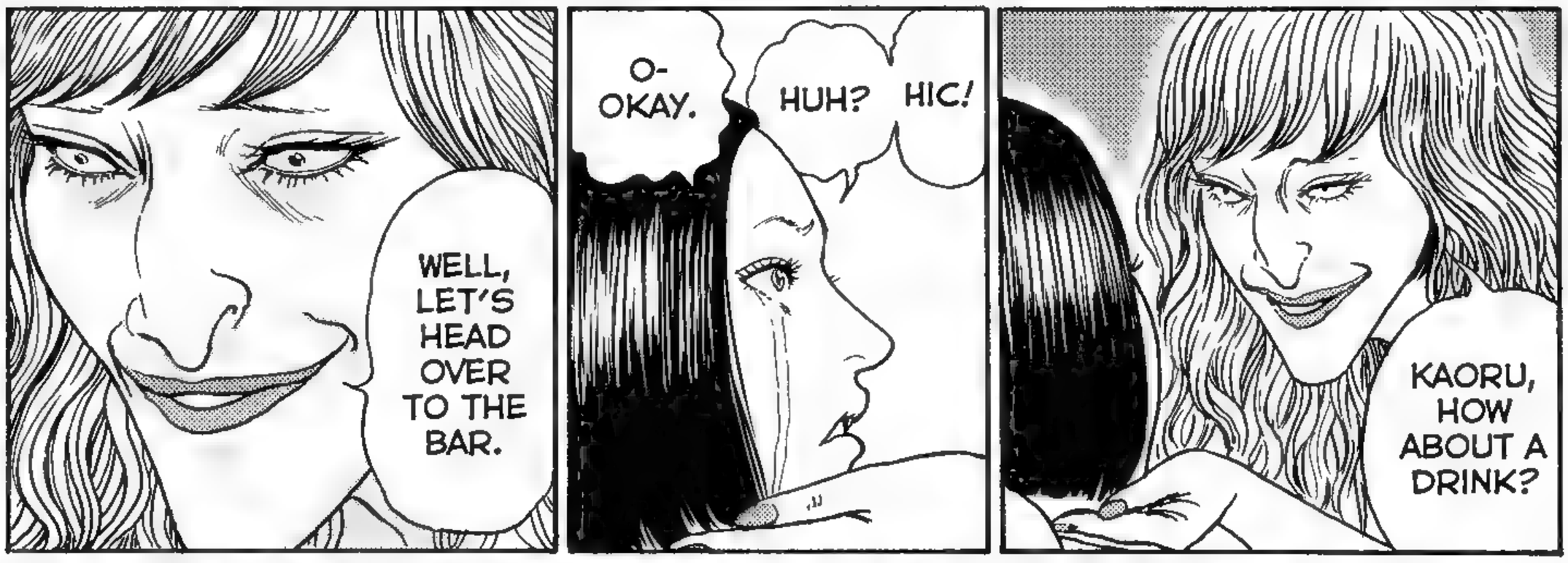
UUNH! UUNH!

NEGISHI, RUB MY SHOULDERS.

AAH! SHOULDER TIC! TIC-Y SHOULDER!

YES, SENSEI.


HNGH!
HNGH!


WELL, LET'S HEAD OVER TO THE BAR.
O-OKAY.
HUH? HIC!
KAORU, HOW ABOUT A DRINK?

WHEN IT COMES DOWN TO IT, IT'S THE ZENITH OF MY COL-LECTING HABIT.
I'VE COLLECTED IN THIS ROOM ONLY THE QUIRKIEST ALCOHOL FROM ALL PLACES AND TIMES.

HEE HEE.

...

DRINK IT IF YOU CAN.

THIS ONE'S FAIRLY QUIRKY. ABSINTHE.

PWAAAAH!

GULP

PWAAAAH!

SEE? YOU PROLLY CAN'T TAKE ANY-MORE.

BLRB

BLRB

HOLY CRAP! YOU'RE JUST A TIC FAKER. DON'T GET COCKY!!

GLUG

THIS IS NINETY PERCENT ALCOHOL, YOU KNOW!!

BRUG

Y-YOU CAN REALLY DRINK?!

GIMME ANOTHER !!

I LIKE THIS LINE THE MAIN CHARACTER SAYS.

HEY, NANAKUSE SENSEI...YOUR NOVEL *FORTY-EIGHT AGAINST SEVEN*, RIGHT?

HUH? WHADDYA THINK?

SENSEI, WHADDYA THINK? I'M A TIC FAKER?

WHEN I READ IT, I THOUGHT, I'M A PERSON WITH TICS, YOU KNOW?

"...PEOPLE WITH TICS AND PEOPLE WITHOUT!"

"THERE ARE TWO TYPES OF PEOPLE IN THIS WORLD...

KZM

YOU HAVE YOUR CROSS-DRESSING HABIT, BUT BE CLEAR! YOU'RE A MAN, AFTER ALL!!

...

YOU'VE GOT BAD DRUNK TIC...

DO YOU SEE? AM I A PERSON WITH TICS?!

RRRRIP

RIGHT, SENSEI?

AND I'M SAYING ALL THIS STUFF, BUT I TOTALLY RECOGNIZE YOU AS ONE TOO, YOU KNOW.

THEN IT'S ALL GOOD. AS LONG AS YOU RECOGNIZE ME AS A TIC HAVER.

SO YOU RECOG-NIZE ME?!

YES, SENSEI?

HEY, NEGISHI.

WHEE.

ZZR.

ZZR.

AND YOUR EDITOR, ISHII, IS HERE.

ALSO, SENSEI, TONIGHT YOU HAVE THE SOIRÉE WITH THE TOWNS-PEOPLE.

UNDER-STOOD.

ZZR.

ZZR.

THIS ONE MIGHT HAVE SOME UNEXPECTED PROMISE. THROW HER IN THE DUNGEON.

YOU JUST WAIT. THIS IS THE FINAL DRAFT.

ISHII. THIS IS THIS MONTH'S MANUSCRIPT.

YOUR MANU-SCRIPTS REALLY MUST BE LIKE THIS.

SENSEI, YOU SHOW YOUR WONDERFUL HABIT WITH PAPER ONCE AGAIN.

KRNCH

TOSS

HERE.

WELL, WHEN IT COMES DOWN TO IT, IT'S A MATTER OF COMPAT-IBILITY.

AND I MUST SAY, WITH TONIGHT'S SOIRÉE YOU REALLY ARE LOVED IN THIS AREA, AREN'T YOU?

...WOULD LIVE IN OUR TOWN.

IT MAKES ALL OF US TRULY PROUD THAT SOMEONE AS FAMOUS AS YOURSELF...

NANAKUSE SENSEI.

MAY YOU STAY A LONG TIME!

WELL, IT IS QUITE THE HONOR!

WHAT IT COMES DOWN TO IS I HEARD THAT THIS AREA WAS A KUSECHI, SO I MOVED HERE.

SNORT SNORT SNORT

THAT IS TRUE. THERE ARE SO MANY STORIES ABOUT THIS AREA...

...SUCH AS IT USED TO BE AN EXECUTION SITE OR A DEN OF HEATHENS.

SNORT SNORT SNORT SNORT SNORT SNORT SNORT SNORT

...HAVE THEIR OWN STORIES, DON'T THEY?

SNORT SNORT

WHEN IT COMES RIGHT DOWN TO IT, THE SO-CALLED KUSECHI ...

CRACK CRACK CRACK CRACK

THAT IS ABSOLUTELY CORRECT.

UNAUX UNAUX

I SEE... SO THEN IT SEEMS THAT THIS LAND DOES HAVE A SPECIAL POWER.

WHUK WHUK WHUK WHUK WHUK WHUK WHUK WHUK WHUK

SHAKE SHAKE SHAKE SHAKE SHAKE SHAKE SHAKE SHAKE

HYNAAH!

HYNAAH!

HYNAAH!

HYNAAH!

HYNAAH!

HYNAAH!

Maga Town Association Hall

HYNAAH!

WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO WITH ME?!

WHAT—

LET ME OUT OF HEEERE!!

WHEN I CAME TO, I WAS IN A DUNGEON.

LET ME OUUUUUT!

ONCE MY EYES GOT USED TO THE DARKNESS, I REALIZED THAT I WASN'T THE ONLY ONE LOCKED UP THERE.

THE SAME MOTION OVER AND OVER.

THEY WERE ALL MOVING REPETITIVELY.

KLAK KLAK

AH!

THESE PEOPLE ...

SEEMS YOU'VE SOBERED UP, KOKETSU.

KLAK KLAK KLAK KLAK KLAK KLAK

WHAT IS THIS ALL ABOUT?

UM, NANAKUSE SENSEI.

HOWEVER, UNFORTUNATELY, THERE'S NOT ONE RIGHT NOW WHO LIVES UP TO MY EXPECTATIONS.

THIS LOT IN HERE, THEY'VE ALL DEVELOPED TICS AND TWITCHES FROM THE STRESS OF CONFINEMENT...

THEY JUST DISPLAY THE MOST RUN-OF-THE-MILL MOVEMENTS.

I DON'T UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT!

I'VE GOT HIGH HOPES FOR YOU... THAT A UNIQUE TIC, SOMETHING NO ONE'S EVER SEEN BEFORE, WILL REVEAL ITSELF.

BUT YOU, HOWEVER, HAVE A FAIR BIT OF PROMISE. PERHAPS A SPECIAL ABILITY WILL BLOSSOM WHILE YOU'RE IMPRISONED.

PLEASE LET ME OUT OF HERE!

PLEASE STOP KIDDING WITH ME!

AND THEN, MY NEW NOVEL WILL BE BORN.

I'LL GET MY INSPIRATION FROM YOUR SPECIAL TIC.

BE HAPPY! YOU'LL BE ABLE TO LIVE ON FOREVER IN MY NOVEL!

IN MY GREATEST MASTER-PIECE!!

LET ME OUT OF HEEEEERE!

AS IF ANYONE WOULD BE *YOUR* FAN!

I'M SERI-OUUUS!

LET ME OUT OF HEEEEERE!

WAAAAH!

I'LL KILL YOU!

YOU WON'T GET AWAY WITH THIS! YOU PERVERTED BASTARD!

PLEASE ... HELP ME...

SLAP

WEIRD THINGS STARTED HAPPENING TO MY BODY.

AS IF I'M GONNA MOVE!

YOU CAN'T MAKE ME TWITCH!

YOU CAN'T MAKE SOME BIZARRE TIC BLOOM...

YOU CAN'T MAKE ME MOVE...

B-BUT IT'S WEIRD. SOMETHING'S HAPPENING IN MY BODY...

SOME-THING'S WEIRD.

AND MY FACE...

IT'S LIKE... I FEEL LIKE IT'S STIFFENING UP.

AAAH!

AAH!

I KNOW. I'VE BEEN WATCHING HER THIS WHOLE TIME ON THE MONITOR.

SHE HASN'T BEEN TOUCHING HER FOOD AT ALL.

IT'S ABOUT KO-KETSU.

SENSEI.

WHAT IS IT, NEGISHI?

I SUPPOSE IT'S ABOUT TIME I WENT AND CHECKED ON HER.

CHAK

SHE HASN'T EVEN TWITCHED.

SHE'S BEEN IN THAT POSITION FOR THREE WHOLE DAYS NOW!

SHE HAS A PULSE.

SHE'S ALIVE.

AAAH!

TOTTER

ZOZZ

O-OF COURSE! I GET IT!

TH-THIS...

THE TIC!!

SHE'S FROZEN HER ENTIRE BODY COMPLETELY SOLID...WHAT IT COMES DOWN TO IS THAT I HAVE TO DECLARE THIS THE ULTIMATE TIC!!

ONCE MAGAMI NANAKUSE HAD ACCEPTED THE SPIRIT OF HER MUSE...AND WRITTEN HER MASTERPIECE, ULTIMATE TIC...

ULTIMATE TIC

MAGAMI NANAKUSE

WINNER OF THE 18TH JAPAN FANTASTICAL NOVEL AWARD

HEEEEE!

I'VE GOT MY INSPIRATION!

...AND I WAS DONATED TO THE TOWN ASSOCIATION HALL.

...SHE HAD NO MORE USE FOR ME...

MAGAMI NANAKUSE/END

WHISPERING WOMAN

HERE? OR OVER THERE...?

RIGHT? ...LEFT?

WHAT SHOULD I DO?

WHICH WAY SHOULD I GO...?

MAYUMI, THE ONLY CHILD OF THE WEALTHY SHIGEKI SANTO...

...WAS POS-SESSED OF A UNIQUE DISPOSI-TION.

I'M RESIGNING, EFFECTIVE IMMEDIATELY.

SIR, I CAN NO LONGER TAKE CARE OF HER!

P-PLEASE RECON-SIDER.

SHOULD I EAT SUPPER? OR SHOULD I GET IN THE BATH?

SHOULD I RUN?

SHOULD I WALK?

SHOULD I SIT?

SHOULD I START WASHING AT MY ARMS? SHOULD I START AT MY LEGS?

CAN I BLINK?

IS IT OKAY TO STAND?

SHOULD I SLEEP?

IS IT GOOD TO SMILE NOW? GOOD TO GET ANGRY? GOOD TO CRY?

ORANGE JUICE? APPLE JUICE? GRAPE JUICE? WHICH ONE SHOULD I DRINK?

IS IT OKAY TO BREATHE?

BETTER TO GO TO THE TOILET? BETTER NOT TO?

CAN I BLINK?

WHAT SHOULD I DO AFTER THIIIIS?!

AAAAH!

MAYUMI ooo ...

WHAT SHOULD I DO AFTER THIS?

SHOULD I BE AWAKE?

WHAT SHOULD I WEAR TODAY?

SANTO

KREE

PLEASE... COME IN...

MY NAME IS MITSU UCHIDA.

I SAW YOUR HELP-WANTED AD AND CAME FOR THE INTERVIEW.

IF SOMEONE DOESN'T GIVE HER CONSTANT INSTRUCTION, SHE PANICS...

AS YOU KNOW, MAYUMI CAN'T DECIDE WHAT TO DO BY HERSELF...

YES...

DO YOU UNDERSTAND THE BASIC IDEA OF THE JOB?

NONE OF THEM COULD ENDURE MAYUMI'S BARRAGE OF QUESTIONS. THEY ALL QUIT.

HOWEVER, NONE OF THE ATTENDANTS I'VE HIRED UP TO NOW HAS LASTED VERY LONG.

AT ANY RATE... PLEASE COME AND MEET MY DAUGHTER NOW.

HER MOTHER DIED WHEN SHE WAS YOUNG, SO FOR MAYUMI, TRUSTING PEOPLE IS CRITICAL.

I TRIED A ROTATING SYSTEM OF HELPERS, BUT IT DIDN'T GO WELL.

SHE NEEDS TO HAVE THE SOLID SUPPORT OF A SINGLE ATTENDANT.

AAAAAH! WHAT SHOULD I DOOOOOO!

KNOCK KNOCK

AAAAH!

AAAAAAAAH!

SHOULD I GO TO LIE DOWN?! ON MY BACK?! MY STOMACH?!

SHOULD I STAND?! SHOULD I SIT?!

OR ON MY HEAD?!

YOU SEE HOW IT IS... MS. UCHIDA, I REALIZE THIS IS ABRUPT, BUT PLEASE...

SIT ON A CHAIR?! SIT ON THE FLOOR? ON MY KNEES?! CROSS-LEGGED?!

KNEES TO MY CHEST?!

HOW?!

MAYUMI ... SIT DOWN.

THE BED? HOW? ON MY KNEES?! CROSS-LEGGED?! HOLDING MY KNEES?!

MAYUMI... SIT ON THE BED OVER THERE.

YES SIR...

YE—

AND SLOWLY LOWER YOUR BUM.

THAT'S IT...

WALK TO THE BED...

THAT'S IT...

NO...JUST LOWER YOUR BUM ONTO THE BED...AS YOU WOULD SIT IN A CHAIR.

NOW, TAKE YOUR HANDS OFF THE WALL.

UNTIL YOU CALM DOWN...

BREATHE FOR A WHILE...

OKAY...

FOO HAA

...

R-RIGHT.

KEEP GOING!

NOW WHAT SHOULD I DO?!

I-I SAT DOWN...

THERE WE GO, STAND UP...

OH RIGHT... OKAY, WE'LL GO FOR A WALK IN THE GARDEN NOW...

WHAT NEXT?

...

FOO! HAA!

FOO! HAA!

...AND THAT NIGHT, SHE STAYED WITH HER UNTIL SHE FELL ASLEEP.

FOR THE REST OF THAT DAY, MITSU UCHIDA...

...STAYED BY MAYUMI'S SIDE AND GAVE HER INSTRUC-TIONS...

ALL RIGHT... THEN I'LL SEE YOU TOMORROW AT EIGHT A.M....

BUT THANKS TO YOU, MAYUMI HAD A STABLE DAY...COULD I ASK YOU TO KEEP COMING, STARTING TOMORROW?

MS. UCHIDA, I'M SORRY FOR THROWING YOU INTO IT ON YOUR FIRST DAY...

IT'S WONDERFUL THAT YOU FOUND SOMEONE GOOD, SIR.

FOR THE TIME BEING, MAYUMI'S MENTAL STATE IS ENTIRELY STABLE.

LOOKING AT THE SURVEILLANCE FOOTAGE FROM THE CAMERAS IN THE HOUSE, SHE NEVER NEGLECTS HER DUTIES.

IT'S BEEN A MONTH... SHE'S THE FIRST TO HAVE EVER STAYED THIS LONG...

MITSU UCHIDA'S THE FIRST ONE WHO'S BEEN ABLE TO ACCOMPLISH THAT.

MAYUMI IS GOING OUT AND GOING SHOPPING OR HAVING DINNER WITHOUT ANY PROBLEMS...

IT'S TRUE SHE HAS REALLY DONE A GREAT JOB THIS MONTH.

HER INSTRUC-TIONS ARE DETAILED AND PRECISE.

CONVERSELY, THERE'S ALSO SOMETHING CREEPY ABOUT IT...

BUT...

OF COURSE, MITSU IS CONSTANTLY ATTENDING HER THE WHOLE TIME...

...SHE MUST BE INCREDIBLY MENTALLY STRONG TO BE ABLE TO SUSTAIN THIS EXTREMELY DIFFICULT WORK.

THANKS TO HER, MAYUMI CAN DO THE THINGS SHE COULDN'T DO BY HERSELF.

AND WE DON'T REALLY KNOW THAT MUCH ABOUT HER TO BEGIN WITH, DO WE...

BEING ABLE TO PUT UP WITH MAYUMI'S ABNORMAL DISPOSITION IS...

...IN A CERTAIN SENSE, ITSELF AN ABNORMAL-ITY.

SHE CONTINUALLY GAVE INSTRUCTIONS WITHOUT A BREAK FOR THE SIXTEEN OR SO HOURS MAYUMI WAS AWAKE.

THERE WAS INDEED SOMETHING ABNORMAL ABOUT MITSU UCHIDA'S WORK.

...MITSU DREW EVEN CLOSER TO MAYUMI'S EAR TO GIVE HER EVER MORE DETAILED INSTRUCTIONS.

AND ALTHOUGH SHE HAD BEEN GOING LIKE THIS FOR MORE THAN A MONTH, RATHER THAN EASING UP...

SHE STAGGERED HOME IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT.

IF YOU KEEP THIS UP, YOU'LL RUIN YOUR HEALTH.

NO, MITSU, YOU'RE EXHAUSTED... TAKE TOMORROW OFF.

YES, SIR... ALL RIGHT THEN, I'LL COME AGAIN TOMORROW MORNING AT EIGHT.

MITSU, THANK YOU AGAIN FOR ALL YOUR HARD WORK TODAY.

IS THAT SO? WELL, PLEASE DON'T PUSH YOURSELF TOO HARD.

YOUR ESSENTIAL SELF...?

I FEEL LIKE THIS WORK IS BRINGING ME BACK TO MY ESSENTIAL SELF... THROUGH YOUR DAUGHTER'S HAPPINESS, I ALSO FIND HAPPINESS...

I... I LIKE THIS JOB...

NO... I'M FINE...

NO...IT'S NOTHING...

GOOD NIGHT.

WHAT?

SOMETIMES, YOU SEEM TO GET THESE BRUISES ON YOUR FACE. IS ANYTHING WRONG...?

THERE'S ALSO...

OH, THAT REMINDS ME...

OH IT'S YOU? COME IN.

SIR.

TWO MONTHS LATER

MM...

HOW HAS MITSU BEEN RECENTLY?

PROBABLY TAKING A WALK AS USUAL.

HMM...

HOW ARE YOUR DAUGHTER AND MITSU TODAY?

WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

TO THE POINT WHERE I GET A SLIGHT CHILL SEEING HER THERE.

IN THE LAST TWO MONTHS, HER WORK HAS REALLY EXCEEDED THAT OF A NORMAL PERSON.

...NOT NORMAL ...

MITSU'S DEFI-NITELY...

THAT'S RIGHT...THE DETAILED CHOICES OF EVERYDAY LIFE... FOR INSTANCE, WHETHER TO PUT JAM ON YOUR BREAD AT BREAKFAST OR BUTTER...

TO PUT TWO FLOWERS FROM THE GARDEN IN THE VASE OR THREE...

GOOD LUCK ...?

IN FACT, SHE EVEN BRINGS MAYUMI GOOD LUCK.

EXHAUSTED AS SHE IS, MITSU CARRIES OUT HER DUTIES PERFECTLY...

NO...SHE ACTUALLY BRINGS HER GOOD LUCK.

IN OTHER WORDS, IT'S A FRAME OF MIND. IS THAT IT?

THANKS TO HER, MAYUMI SEEMS TO HAVE GOOD LUCK.

SHE WORKS TO ADD THE RESULTS OF ALL THESE CHOICES TO MAYUMI.

AND THE TRUTH IS, THE WALKING ROUTE THE GIRLS USUALLY TAKE WOULD HAVE BROUGHT THEM TO THAT LOCATION.

FOR INSTANCE, LOOK. THAT TRUCK ACCIDENT THE OTHER DAY...MANY OF THE PEOPLE ON THE SIDEWALK WERE KILLED OR INJURED...

THAT DAY, MITSU HAPPENED TO CHANGE THEIR ROUTE AND SO THEY ESCAPED WITHOUT INCIDENT.

YOU DON'T SEEM TO BELIEVE ME? ...BUT HONESTLY, IF YOU SAW MITSU NOW...

UH... UH-HUH ...

FOR BOTH FATHER AND DAUGHTER, MITSU IS A GODDESS OF FORTUNE.

I REALLY SHOOK LIKE A LEAF THEN...

KREE KACHAK

OH, MAYUMI, YOU'RE BACK? YES, OF COURSE, COME IN.

DADDY... CAN I COME IN?

KNOCK KNOCK

KREEEE

WHISPER
WHISPER

WHISPER
WHISPER

THESE FLOWERS ARE SURE TO BRING ME GOOD LUCK.

YOU DID? THANK YOU.

THEY WERE SO PRETTY BLOOMING ON THE SIDE OF THE ROAD, SO I PICKED YOU SOME.

DADDY, HERE.

WHISPER
WHISPER
WHISPER
WHISPER

MM-HMM.

OKAY, SEE YOU, DADDY...

WHISPER
WHISPER
WHISPER
WHISPER

G-GGLE

THAT TICKLES!

R-RIGHT...

WHAT DID I TELL YOU, SANNAN?

SLAM

WELL, LET'S HEAR IT.

MM...I DID HIRE THEM TO TRACE HER, DIDN'T I?

THE RESULTS OF THE INVESTIGATION INTO MITSU UCHIDA HAVE COME FROM THE DETECTIVE AGENCY.

INCIDENTALLY, SIR...

HIS NAME IS RYOICHI AGA. HE'S UNEMPLOYED AND SIMPLY LIES AROUND MITSU'S APARTMENT...A KEPT MAN, IN OTHER WORDS.

MITSU UCHIDA IS SINGLE, BUT SHE APPARENTLY LIVES WITH A MAN...

FIRST OF ALL...

MITSU DOES ANYTHING AGA SAYS, AND HE BEATS HER BASICALLY EVERY DAY.

EVERYTHING SHE DOES COMES DOWN TO AGA.

AGA IS QUITE THE PLAYBOY, AND HE DEMANDS MONEY FROM MITSU FOR HIS ENTERTAINMENT EXPENSES.

HE SEEMS TO SPEND PRETTY MUCH ALL OF THE MONEY MITSU EARNS.

MITSU WORKING LIKE SHE'S BEING FORCED TO RUN IS BECAUSE OF HIM, IS IT?

I SEE...

IT SEEMS THE TRUTH IS, HE FORCED MITSU INTO IT.

HE'S THE ONE WHO CAME ACROSS THE AD FOR AN ATTENDANT FOR YOUR DAUGHTER, AND THE HIGH PAY.

IT IS STRANGE ...

...DOES THE OPPOSITE IN HER PERSONAL LIFE, OBEYING WHATEVER THIS MAN SAYS.

IT'S A STRANGE THING...THIS WOMAN WHO GIVES MAYUMI SUCH WISE AND ACCURATE INSTRUCTIONS...

YES...

AFTER ALL, YOUR DAUGHTER'S ATTENDANT IS SUFFERING.

AT ANY RATE, SIR... THIS ISN'T A PROBLEM WE CAN SIMPLY IGNORE.

...YOU COULD SAY THAT MITSU'S BEEN ABLE TO WORK WITH SUCH FOCUS UP TO NOW BECAUSE OF THIS MAN, AGA.

BUT WE CAN'T DO ANYTHING ABOUT HER PRIVATE LIFE...AND...

WOULD THE NOW-FREE MITSU KEEP EXPENDING EVERY EFFORT FOR MAYUMI AS SHE HAS SO FAR?

WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF WE DROVE AGA OFF THROUGH SOME MEANS TO SAVE MITSU?

I'M SURE YOU'RE RIGHT ...

ER.. I...

BUT WHAT DO YOU THINK?

I THINK WE SHOULD LEAVE THE SITUATION ALONE FOR MAYUMI'S SAKE.

YOU THINK SOMEDAY I'LL BE ABLE TO LIVE BY MYSELF?

WHISPER WHISPER

MITSU? CAN I ASK? SHOULD I NOT ASK?

WHISPER WHISPER

WHISPER WHISPER

WHISPER WHISPER

WHISPER WHISPER

WHISPER WHISPER

REALLY? SHOULD I BE HAPPY ABOUT THAT?

OR WOULD IT BE BETTER TO BE SAD?

THE POLICE SUSPECTED THE MAN SHE LIVED WITH, AGA, HAD BEATEN HER TO DEATH. HE WAS PUT ON THE NATIONAL WANTED LIST.

THERE WERE EXTERNAL INJURIES ON HER BODY, AND THESE WERE DETERMINED TO BE THE DIRECT CAUSE OF DEATH.

CROSS POLICE DO NOT CROSS

IT WAS TWO WEEKS AFTER THAT WHEN MITSU DIED.

...SHE WOULD'VE DIED FAIRLY SOON EITHER WAY.

HOWEVER, THE DOCTOR WHO DID THE AUTOPSY NOTED THAT FROM THE STATE OF HER EMACIATION...

HER BODY WAS FOUND IN HER APARTMENT, COMPLETELY EMACIATED.

KACHAK

WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO MAYUMI WITHOUT MITSU?!

THIS IS TERRIBLE!!

GOOD MORNING.

OH, DADDY.

THAT TICKLES ...

HEE HEE!

WHAT?!

IF YOU'RE LOOKING FOR MITSU, SHE'S RIGHT HERE.

MAYUMI... THE TRUTH IS, MITSU...

OR MAYBE MITSU'S GHOST REALLY WAS THERE...

PERHAPS IT WAS A DELUSION OF MAYUMI'S THAT MITSU WAS STILL THERE...

...MITSU WERE STILL RIGHT THERE, DESPITE BEING ALONE.

EVEN THOUGH MITSU WAS GONE, MAYUMI ACTED AS THOUGH...

...MR. SANTO FELT LIKE HE COULD ALSO HEAR MITSU'S WHISPERING.

WHISPER WHISPER WHISPER WHISPER

OCCA-SIONALLY, WHEN HE LISTENED CLOSELY ...

HAVING BEEN COMPLETELY AGA'S PUPPET IN HER PRIVATE LIFE...

...MAYBE THE WORK LET MITSU START OVER IN ANOTHER LIFE THROUGH MAYUMI.

WHEN SHE WAS ALIVE, MITSU SAID SHE FELT LIKE THIS JOB WAS GIVING HER BACK HER ESSENTIAL SELF.

KRK KRK KRK

HM?

...MITSU'S PROTECTING MAYUMI EVEN NOW. I HAVE TO GIVE THANKS FOR THAT...

EITHER WAY...

OR MORE LIKE THIS?

KRK KRK

KRK KRK

LIKE THIS?

MAYUMI... WHAT ARE YOU DOING...

KRK KRK

LIKE THIS?

LIKE THIS?

THEN ...

...ONE NIGHT A FEW DAYS LATER...

LIKE THIS?

HARDER?

KRK KRK

ALL THAT BLOOD ...?!

M-MAYUMI ...

DADDY.

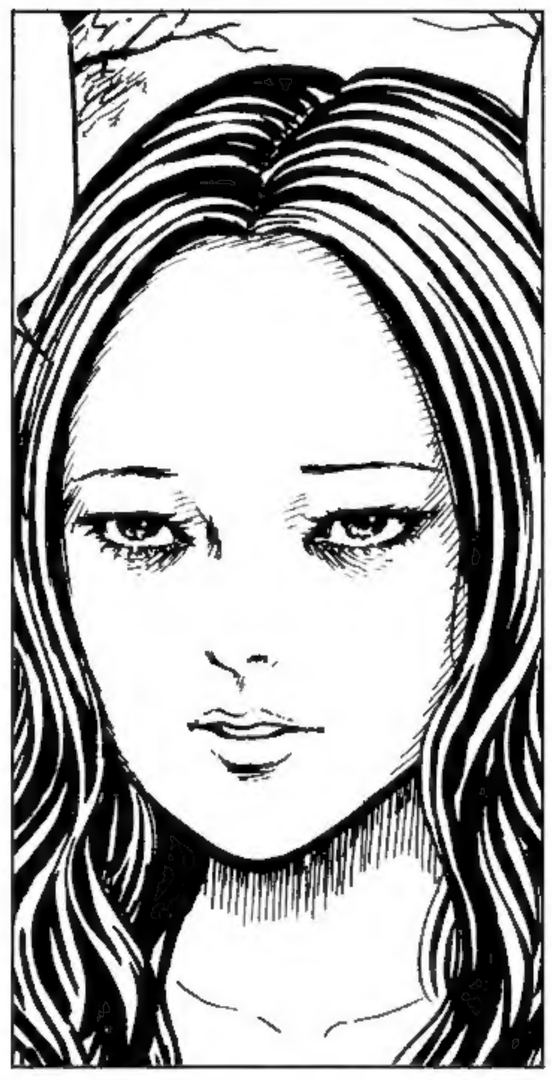
I'M HOME...

BECAUSE SHE TOLD ME TO KILL HIM... MITSU DID...

WHISPER WHISPER WHISPER WHISPER WHISPER WHISPER

...I KILLED HIM. ...AGA...

WHISPERING WOMAN/END



AFTERWORD

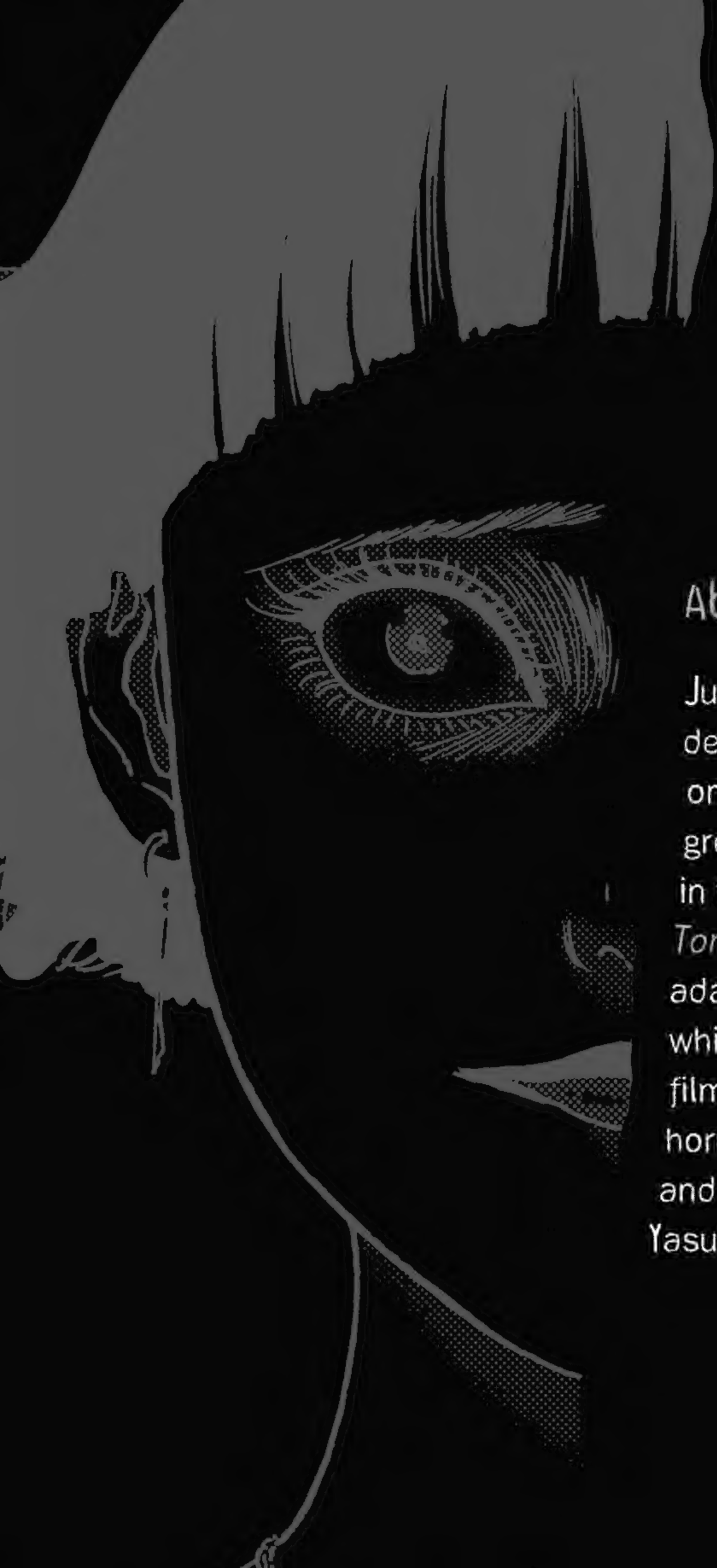
SO THIS IS MY FIRST COLLECTION OF HORROR STORIES IN EIGHT YEARS. EVER SINCE I PUT OUT *SHIN YAMI NO KOE KAIDAN* IN 2006.

DURING THOSE EIGHT YEARS, I WAS DOING PLENTY OF WORK ON ILLUSTRATIONS AND MANGA ABOUT CATS OR ABOUT SOCIETY, BUT EVEN TAKING THAT INTO ACCOUNT, THE TIME SEEMS TOO EMPTY SOMEHOW. WHAT ON EARTH WAS I DOING ALL THAT TIME? WELL, I DO REMEMBER A BUNCH OF THINGS—LIKE SOME REALLY DETAILED WORK AND A BUSY PRIVATE LIFE—BUT EVEN STILL, EIGHT YEARS?! IT IS TRUE THAT I'M NOT AS STRONG AS I USED TO BE AND I COULDN'T WORK ANY FASTER THAN I WAS, BUT I FEEL LIKE I WASTED A WHOLE LOT OF TIME. DURING THIS PERIOD, MR. TOSHIYASU HARADA, MY EDITOR, A MAN WHO HAD BEEN SO GOOD TO ME FOR SO MANY YEARS AT ASAHI SONORAMA, PASSED AWAY. I HAD WANTED TO WORK WITH MR. HARADA AGAIN, SO WHEN HE PASSED AWAY, HE LEFT A GAPING HOLE IN MY HEART. OH, AND A FEW HOURS AFTER MR. HARADA LEFT US, OUR CAT YONSUKE ALSO DIED (THE MODEL FOR THE MONSTER CAT YON THAT SHOWS UP IN MY CAT MANGA). IT MIGHT BE A COINCIDENCE, BUT I EXPERIENCED IT AS A MYSTERIOUS SORT OF CONNECTION.

AND SO, A COLLECTION OF HORROR STORIES AFTER EIGHT YEARS. WHEN HE SAW MY FIRST STORYBOARD FOR THE FIRST STORY, "FUTON," MY EDITOR MR. YOSHIDA GOT WORRIED AND CALLED ME. HE FELT THAT MY INSTINCTS FOR HORROR HADN'T RETURNED. I DON'T KNOW IF IT WAS BECAUSE I HADN'T DRAWN HORROR IN SUCH A LONG TIME, BUT IT WAS INDEED A SUB-PAR STORYBOARD. I REDID THE WHOLE THING, BUT IT STILL DIDN'T QUITE COME TOGETHER FOR ME; IT WAS A RELUCTANT START TO MY FIRST HORROR SERIALIZATION IN SOME TIME. I WENT ON TO DRAW SIX MORE STORIES AFTER THAT, SO MAYBE IN THE END MY HORROR INSTINCTS HAVE RETURNED...?

AT ANY RATE, I'M VERY HAPPY TO HAVE THIS COLLECTION PUBLISHED. I WANT TO OFFER MY SINCEREST GRATITUDE TO EVERYONE IN THE *NEMUKI+* EDITORIAL DIVISION WHO GAVE ME THIS OPPORTUNITY, STARTING WITH MY EDITORS MIKIO YOSHIDA AND MAKIKO HARA, AND TO KEISUKE MINOHARA OF ROCKET BOMB WHO DID THE COVER DESIGN.

JUNJI ITO
APRIL 30, 2014



About the Author

Junji Ito made his professional manga debut in 1987 and since then has gone on to be recognized as one of the greatest contemporary artists working in the horror genre. His titles include *Tomie* and *Uzumaki*, which have been adapted into live-action films, and *Gyo*, which was adapted into an animated film. Ito's influences include classic horror manga artists Kazuo Umezu and Hideshi Hino, as well as authors Yasutaka Tsutsui and H.P. Lovecraft.

Fragments of Horror

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